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**Searching for the "True Process of Change". Consent and discord among
indigenous peasant movements in northern Potosí, Bolivia**

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Searching for the 'True Process of Change'

Consent and Discord Among
Indigenous Peasant Movements in
Northern Potosí, Bolivia

Monika Hess, Sabino Ruiz Flores

NCCR North-South Dialogue, no. 50
2014

dialogue

The present study was carried out at the following partner institutions of the NCCR North-South:



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Left: Professionals from INRA (National Institute for Agrarian Reform) are informing members of a *comunidad* about the regularization of land property. *Right:* Municipal meeting with local representatives disputing the new legislation on autonomies. (Photos by Monika Hess)

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Abbreviations

ADN	National Democratic Action (<i>Acción Democrática Nacionalista</i>)
CIDES-UMSA	Postgraduate in Development Studies at the state university Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (<i>Postgrado en Ciencias del Desarrollo de la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés</i>)
CIDOB	Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia (<i>Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia</i>)
CIPCA	Centre for Research and the Promotion of Farmers (<i>Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado</i>)
CMMK	Mallku Kuta mining company (<i>Compañía Minera Mallku Kuta</i>)
CNTCB	National Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (<i>Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia</i>)
CONAMAQ	National Council of Highland Ayllus and Markas (<i>Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu</i>)
COMIBOL	Bolivian Mining Corporation (<i>Corporación Minera de Bolivia</i>)
CPE	Bolivian Constitution (<i>Constitución Política del Estado</i>)
CSUTCB	Union Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (<i>Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia</i>)
ETAPI	Technical Staff of the Ayllus and Indigenous Peoples (<i>Equipo Técnico de los Ayllus y Pueblos Indígenas</i>)
FAOI-NP	Federation of Indigenous Ayllus of the North of Potosí (<i>Federación de Ayllus Originarios Indígenas del Norte de Potosí</i>)
FSMTO-NP “BS”	Union Federation of Indigenous Working Women of the North of Potosí (<i>Federación Sindical de Mujeres Trabajadoras Originarias Norte Potosí “Bartolina Sisa”</i>)
FSUTOA-NP	Union Federation of Indigenous Workers and Ayllus of the North of Potosí (<i>Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Originarios y Ayllus del Norte de Potosí</i>)
INRA	National Institute for Agrarian Reform (<i>Instituto de Reforma Agraria</i>)
ISALP	Centre for Social Investigation and Legal Advice (<i>Centro de Investigación Social y Asesoramiento Legal de Potosí</i>)
MAPIQ	Alternative Movement of Indigenous Quechua Peoples (<i>Movimiento Alternativo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Originarias Quechuas</i>)
MAS-IPSP	Movement to Socialism – Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (<i>Movimiento al Socialismo — Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos</i>)
MOP	Indigenous Popular Movement (<i>Movimiento Originario Popular</i>)
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement (<i>Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario</i>)
NCCR Norte-Sur	National Centre of Competence in Research North-South
NCQQ	Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation (<i>Nación Charkas-Qhara Qhara</i>)
PRODII	Interdisciplinary Integrated Development Programme (<i>Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario</i>)
RC-CAD	Ricerca e Cooperazione – Development Support Centre (<i>Ricerca e Cooperazione – Centro de Apoyo al Desarrollo</i>)
SASC	South American Silver Corp.
TCO	Indigenous Common Property Land (<i>Tierra Comunitaria de Origen</i>)
TIOC	Indigenous Peasant Territory (<i>Territorio Indígena Originario Campesino</i>)

Summary

The electoral victory of the Movement to Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*, MAS) in 2005 gave rise to great expectations in “Evo” (Morales) and the so-called “process of change” and has profoundly transformed indigenous peasant movements’ traditional modes of struggle against the state. Seven years on, we have examined the role of these movements based on a study of two forms of organisation that coexist in the North of Potosí: the Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation (NCQQ), which is made up of *ayllus*, which are pre-colonial territorial and political structures, and the Union Federation of Indigenous Workers and *Ayllus* of the North of Potosí (FSUTOA-NP), with its respective women’s organisation, the Union Federation of Indigenous Working Women of the North of Potosí “Bartolina Sisa” (FSMTO-NP “BS”). We used interviews with leaders, grassroots activists, municipal authorities and participatory observation at assemblies and daily activities of indigenous peasants in two case study localities to collect data about conceptions of “development” and “*vivir bien*” (living well) and the organisations’ strategies to achieve a “true process of change”.

The two organisations have adopted different stances towards the MAS government. Our findings indicate that these are informed by their different conceptions of “true change” and the “plurinational” state. In line with its political vision of reclaiming its ancestral nations and territories as spaces of self-government, the NCQQ prioritises living “as we do”, although it permits the use of new technologies to improve agricultural production. However, such development must respect the principle of preserving the cultural and political ways of life and of Mother Earth. Their estrangement from the MAS government is informed by ideological differences relating to indigenous autonomy and their rejection of natural resource extraction policies – in very concrete terms, the mining concession in Mallku Khota granted to the transnational company South American Silver Corp. (SASC). On the other hand, the FSUTOA-NP and the FSMTO-NP “BS” consider development as a means of fighting the inequality and exploitation from which the indigenous peasant population has suffered since colonial times. They propose an “integrated development” approach that sees the state as a provider of public policies that improve living conditions by satisfying basic needs and productive development, while also defending natural resources, Mother Earth and cultural ways of life. Unlike the NCQQ, the union’s vision is to “liberate the oppressed” by seizing local, departmental and national power. As a result, it has engaged in active support for the MAS government in defence of the political progress made since 2005.

Although these different political visions and concepts of development gave rise to intensified tensions between the two organisations at regional level, they complement each other locally, each having its own responsibilities and attributes.

Our study shows the crucial role these organisations play as intermediaries between the grassroots and the municipalities. Both adopt a number of strategies to achieve development, particularly by exerting influence on the municipalities. However, the findings of this study suggest that the hope and expectations indigenous peasants invest in “change” have not yet been fulfilled. Even though the rise to national power of

an indigenous president represented recognition and self-esteem for indigenous peoples, these conquests are yet to translate into improved living conditions at local level. The reasons for this are complex and difficult to unravel. On the one hand, internal organizational weaknesses and rivalries between organisations make municipal governance difficult. On the other hand, leaders critique the out-of-context administrative procedures, i.e. the difficult *trámites* and *plazos* that hamper to *hacer gestión* both for grassroots representatives as well as municipal authorities and technical staff. These procedures often originate from well-intended ideas to prevent corruption, but they turn into disincentives. Thus, as the involved movement leaders remark, they are exposed to complicated and bureaucratic procedures that are not apt for own cultural and political practices nor for communitarian and agricultural rhythms – they got into a “taxi” that they “do not know how to drive”.

1 Introduction

An alliance of highland and lowland indigenous peasant movements in Bolivia, known as the “Pact of Unity”¹, brought about Evo Morales’ 2005 electoral victory with the “Movement to Socialism – Political Instrument for Sovereignty of the Peoples” (MAS-IPSP). The indigenous peasant population came to power nationally after decades of struggle against its marginalisation by neoliberal governments. This momentous occasion fostered a sense that indigenous communities were finally being recognised by the Bolivian state and by society at large, generating enormous expectations that “Evo” and his *proceso de cambio* (“process of change”) would give the indigenous peasant population not only a new place in Bolivian society, but also improve its living conditions. The rise to national power also blurred the boundaries between social movements and the state, and drastically transformed their earlier attitude towards public authorities.

Evo Morales’ government has an anti-neoliberal discourse that highlights the defence of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and the safeguarding of indigenous rights and sovereignty within a “plurinational” state. To this end, the new Bolivian Constitution approved in 2009 envisages a “prior consultation mechanism” for natural resource extraction within territories declared as indigenous common property lands (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*, TCOs). It also envisages the possibility of converting these TCOs into “indigenous autonomies” (*Territorio Indígena Originario Campesino*, TIOC), which have an even more autonomous status with respect to local political, cultural and juridical practices, along with control over natural resources. Furthermore, the constitution puts forward an alternative paradigm of development called *vivir bien* (living well). According to the Bolivian President, the indigenous peoples’ vision of *vivir bien* is opposed to the capitalist idea of *vivir mejor* (living better), since the latter implies “living at the expense of others, exploiting others, plundering the natural resources, violating Mother Earth, privatising basic utility services”. *Vivir bien* means “living in solidarity, in equality, in harmony, in complementarity, in reciprocity” (Morales 2011: 9).

At the same time, the MAS government pursues a nationalist vision of state-controlled extractive industries, particularly in the oil, gas and mining sectors. As in other resource-rich leftist countries such as Venezuela and Ecuador, the profits from state-controlled resource extraction are crucial to its state-led development and social redistribution programmes and particularly direct payments (*bonos*²; Perreault and Valdivia 2010; Rojas Oruste and Lundstedt Tapia 2011). This agenda has, however, turned out to be difficult to reconcile with indigenous rights, including claims for TCOs and TIOCs. The opposition to state-led natural resource extraction policies has generated tensions with indigenous movements, both in the lowlands and in the highlands (Beb-

1 The “Pact of Unity” was a pragmatic alliance formed between various peasant and indigenous organisations in Bolivia’s highlands and lowlands in 2004 in order to demand a Constitutional Assembly that would draft a new political constitution (Garcés 2011:49).

2 *Bonos* are direct payments to parents for each children enrolled in school (Bono Juancito Pinto), to pregnant women who undergo pre- and postnatal checkups (Juana Azurduy) and to retired people (Renta Dignidad) (Rojas Oruste and Lunstedt Tapia 2011: 22).

bington 2010; Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington 2011; Gustafson and Fabricant 2011; Le Gouill 2011; Schilling-Vacaflor 2008; Webber 2011). They caused the break-up of the Pact of Unity in 2011, with the departure of the *Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia* (CIDOB) first, followed by the *National Council of Highland Ayllus and Markas* (CONAMAQ) (La Prensa, 22.12.2011). These movements began to demand compliance with the new indigenous rights granted in the Bolivian Constitution, including the right to prior consultation and the conservation of natural resources and Mother Earth. The most prominent examples are the rejection of a road construction project leading through the heart of the Indigenous Territory and National Park Isiboro Sécure (TIPNIS) (Frantz 2011) and to the concessions given to the transnational mining company South American Silver Corp. (SASC) in Mallku Khota in northern Potosí (Garces 2012).

This national political panorama is reflected in the antagonistic positions of the two dominant indigenous peasant organisations in northern Potosí. On the one hand, there is the *Federation of Indigenous Workers and Ayllus of the North of Potosí* (FSUTOA-NP) and its respective women's organisation the *Union Federation of Indigenous Working Women of the North of Potosí "Bartolina Sisa"* (FSMTO-NP "BS"), founded in 2008. On the other hand, there is the *Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation* (NCQQ), which grew out of a recasting of pre-colonial forms of political and territorial organisation in *ayllus* in the 1990s.³ While the union organisation remains an important pillar of the MAS government, the NCQQ has distanced itself from the MAS following its opposition to the government's granting of mining concessions in Mallku Khota.

Within this broader setting, the objective of this study is to investigate the current role of indigenous peasant movements in rural development, i.e. in the improvement of people's material livelihoods at grassroots level and hence poverty reduction. Our research questions are as follows. First, have the high expectations in the *proceso de cambio* been met? Did the new influence of indigenous peasant organisations on the state help to emphasise the concerns of the marginalized rural population and to mobilise support for their material livelihoods? Second, what strategies do movements adopt in view of their continued objective to represent the interests of the indigenous peasant population – but this time as part of state power? How do they tread the thin line between being close to the state and simultaneously defending grassroots needs vis-à-vis the state?

Conceptually, the study consists of three parts. First, it collects the opinions of the grassroots and the leaders of the two organisations present in northern Potosí regarding their conceptions and expectations of "development" and "*vivir bien*". Second, it analyses the two organisations' political strategies for achieving "development" and "true change", including their stances towards the MAS government and their local influence on the state, i.e. on the local councils. Third, it collects people's reflections regarding the fulfilment (or not) of expectations and hopes they had put in the *proceso de cambio*.

3 *Ayllu* means family or community in Quechua and Aymara.

This report is divided into nine chapters. The following two chapters explain the research methodology and describe the northern Potosí region where the case study localities are situated. The fourth chapter offers a general perspective of the historic trajectory of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” and the NCQQ, and analyses the causes of their accentuated tensions – tensions that impinge on the positions taken with respect to the MAS. The fifth chapter examines their different forms of organisation and the mechanisms they use to build legitimacy at the grassroots level. The sixth chapter examines how the organisations and their grassroots understand “development” and “*vivir bien*”, as well as the grassroots’ material expectations of development. The seventh chapter examines the organisations’ strategies for meeting grassroots material expectations by means of two examples – their influence on municipal governments and the mobilisation around the Mallku Khota mining concessions. In the eighth chapter we assess our insights and present people’s opinions on the progress and the problems seven years after the *proceso de cambio* began. Finally, the ninth chapter draws together our conclusions regarding the two organisations’ visions and strategies in their quest to achieve “development” and “true change” that improves the livelihoods of their supporters.

2 Methodology

The study follows a qualitative approach that makes it possible to access and understand the perceptions, visions and positions of both the leaders and the grassroots of the two selected indigenous peasant organisations. Data collection triangulates qualitative interviews and participatory observation. In line with our research objectives, the analysis covers different organisational levels from the regional to the communal level (*comunidades*). Two case study localities were selected in the northern Potosi region, viz. the Comunidad of Eskencachi and the Ayllu Qullana, both located in the Municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista (see Fig. 3). The Comunidad of Eskencachi is affiliated to the union organisation, and the Ayllu of Qullana has recently changed its membership from the union organisation to the NCQQ (for further details see Section 4.4).

To begin with, we conducted interviews with professionals of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the region. These interviews gave us initial information about the dynamics of the FSUTOA-NP, the FSMTO-NP “BS” and the NCQQ, and their respective roles in regional development.

We then conducted interviews with present and former leaders/authorities⁴ of FSUTOA-NP, FSMTO-NP “BS”, and the NCQQ at different organisational levels. In addition, interviews were carried out with members of the municipal governments in Sacaca and in San Pedro de Buena Vista (see Fig. 2). This effort was complemented by participatory observation during FSUTOA-NP and FSMTO-NP “BS” congresses held in Pocoata and Sacaca respectively, and in a municipal meeting of the women’s organisation of the Municipality of Sacaca. We visited the municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista (October 2012 and July 2013) and the municipality of Sacaca (in September 2012) to talk to municipal authorities and administrative and technical staff.

Table 1: Number of interviews conducted.

Interviews	Number
NGO professionals	16
Leaders of organisations	27
Women	8
Men	19
Comunidad of Eskencachi	12
Men	8
Women	4
Ayllu of Qullana	19
Men	15
Women	4

Source: Own data.

⁴ In the *ayllu* organisation, leaders are referred by as “*autoridad originara*”, which we generally translate as *ayllu* authority. Union leaders generally are called “*dirigente*” at communal level, or “*ejecutivo/a*” at regional level.



Figure 1: Group work during the research-related workshop. (Photo: Monika Hess)

In order to gather information about the conceptions of life, “development” and *vivir bien* at grassroots level, we conducted interviews and participatory observation regarding the activities and the assemblies of *comunarios y comunarias* in the two case studies. In November 2012, we paid a one-week visit to the Ayllu of Qullana. Two visits were made to the Comunidad of Eskencachi, the first a one-week visit at the end of October and a second, four-day visit in December. It was possible to enter the area thanks to support from the NGO PRODII⁵ and its technical team.⁶ We also visited the area of Mallku Khota twice and spoke to *comunarios*, *comunarias* and regional authorities.

Most interviews with leaders and NGO professionals were conducted in Spanish, while the empirical case study material was obtained in Quechua. Most interviews (see Fig. 1) were recorded and then transcribed into Spanish. The conversations took anything from 15-20 minutes to over an hour, depending on the circumstances and the interviewees’ disposition.

After having systematized the empirical material, the initial findings were presented at a workshop we organised in Llallagua, northern Potosí, at the end of February 2013. The participants included leaders from both organisations, municipal councillors and NGO professionals. The workshop was used to collect critical feedback on our initial findings. Among other things, the participants were divided into four groups, each of which discussed one of the following topics: conceptions of development, the problems of municipal governance, and natural resources. The conclusions and observations were written down on flipchart papers and presented by each group, followed by a plenary discussion.

⁵ *Programa de Desarrollo Integral Interdisciplinario* (Interdisciplinary Integrated Development Programme)

⁶ The NGO implemented a micro-irrigation programme in the Ayllu of Qullana.

Overall, our research helped to obtain valuable insights and information thanks to participants' general willingness and openness to share their experiences, concerns, perceptions and visions. The main constraint of this research was difficult access to the localities, both from a logistical perspective and when encountering resistance and susceptibilities regarding the purpose and scope of our presence in the *comunidades*. This sometimes prevented us from conducting more in-depth interviews. A longer stay would be necessary to gain local people's full confidence.

3 The North of Potosí Region

Northern Potosí refers to the north of the Department of Potosí. It is a predominately rural region made up of five provinces, 14 municipalities and approximately 1,560 *comunidades*. The region covers an area of 13,567 km², which is equivalent to 11.47% of the total area of the Department of Potosí. In 2001, the region had 243,011 inhabitants, which is 31% of the departmental population. The population density in the region is 18 inhabitants/km² (UNDP 2007; GTZ 2007).

The great majority (85%) of the population of northern Potosí lives in scattered *comunidades*. *Comunidades* are small villages composed by indigenous peasant families and are the typical small-scale organisational structure of the peasant/indigenous population in Bolivia. *Comunarios* and *comunarias* are the people who live in such *comunidades*.

Comunarios and *comunarias* base their livelihoods mainly on crop farming and rearing sheep, llamas and goats, supplemented by selling their products and labour in nearby cities. Apart from the former mining centre of Llallagua with about 30,000 inhabitants, the urban population is concentrated in Uncía (5,700) and Chayanta (2,100), and some small villages, most of which house municipal administrations (INE 2011). The closest urban centres are Oruro, Cochabamba and Sucre. The inhabitants of northern Potosí have close relations with all of these cities through labour migration and trade.

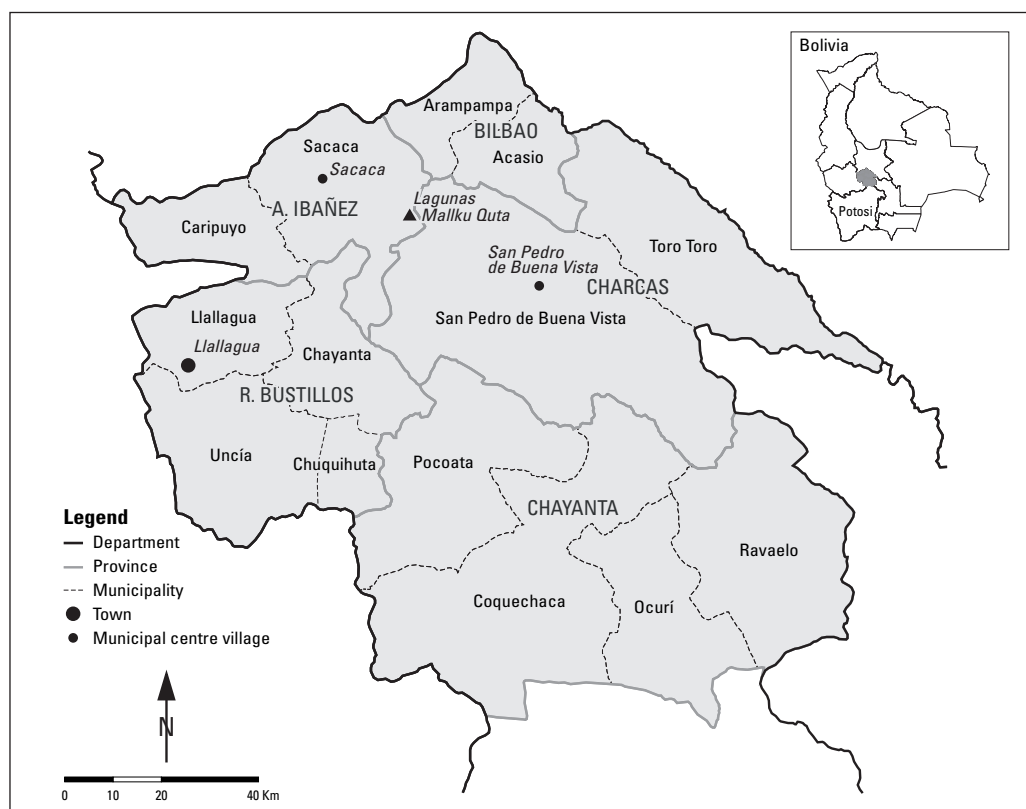


Figure 2: Map of the Northern Potosí region. (Source: own data. Graphics: Martin Steinmann)

The rural municipalities of northern Potosí have one of the country's highest incidences of poverty (PNUD 2007)⁷. According to the UDAPE (2006), extreme poverty⁸ exceeds 90% in the rural municipalities, while in the Province of Bustillo where the urban mining centres are located, extreme poverty affects 68.1% of the population (see Fig. 4).

Table 2: Incidence of extreme poverty in the provinces and municipalities of northern Potosí (in percentage).

Province of R. Bustillo	68.1
Uncía	76.2
Chayanta	87.1
Llallagua	41.1
Province of Chayanta	94.6
Colquechaca	93.6
Ravelo	96.5
Pocoata	92.7
Ocurí	95.4
Province of Charcas	95.6
San Pedro de Buena Vista	96.8
Toro Toro	94.3
Province of A. de Ibáñez	94.0
Sacaca (Villa de Sacaca)	93.7
Caripuyo	94.2
Province of B. Bilbao	94.9
Arapampa	95.1
Acasio	94.7

Source: UDAPE (2006: 55-56, 92).

⁷ Measured according to the Human Development Index (HDI). Data for 2001.

⁸ Data are for 2001. The incidence of extreme poverty is the percentage of the population whose total income is so low that even when using it solely unable to satisfy their minimum nutritional requirements (UDAPE 2006).

3.1 The two case study localities

Case studies were conducted in two neighbouring districts of the municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista (see Fig. 3), which gives an overview of the administrative terminology as well as the case studies' position within this terminology). This is the largest municipality in northern Potosí and consists of seven districts (each with a sub-municipal office), 252 *comunidades* and 31,500 inhabitants (PDM 2009: 3). The data from the 2001 census in Fig. 4 shows that San Pedro has the region's highest poverty incidence (96.8%). The municipality's principal population centre is San Pedro de Buena Vista, which contains around 400 families as well as the public administration. The municipality covers various ecological zones, from high plains to upper valley slopes and valley bottoms (PDM 2009: 29, 61, 213).

One common phenomenon in northern Potosí, including our municipality, is temporary or permanent migration from the communities to nearby urban centres such as Oruro, Cochabamba, Huanuni and Llallagua. People migrate to supplement their agricultural income with daily wage labour in the building and mining sector in particular, although they also sell their products (PDM 2009: 67).

Ancestral structure	Ayllu revival	Syndicates/union organisation	State structure
Qullasuyu (Bolivia)	CONAMAQ	CSUTCB	Central state
Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation	NCQQ (earlier FAOI-NP; MAPIQ as political party) KURAQ MALLKU	FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP "BS" (earlier FSUTC-NP; MOP as political party) Congresos	Departamento (Potosí) (North of Potosí 5 provinces)
Suyu	Suyu MALLKU	Centrales provinciales	Provincia (Charcas)
Marka (o ayllu máximo)	Marka (o ayllu máximo) KURAKA	Centrales seccionales Ampliados	Municipio (San Pedro de Buena Vista) ALCALDE, CONCEJO MUNICIPAL
Ayllu mayor	Ayllu mayor (o jatun ayllu) SEGUNDA MAYOR		Subalcaldía (Distrito Moscarí, Distrito Eskencachi) SUBALCALDE
Ayllu menor (o cabildo)	Ayllu menor (Ayllu Qullana) JILANQO	Subcentrales Ampliados	
	Comunidades "somos ayllu" (Pukara, Qaymani) ALCALDE COMUNAL Asamblea	Comunidades "somos ayllu" DIRIGENTE / BOARD OF SYNDICATE Asamblea	Comunidades "somos ex hacienda" (Eskencachi)
Comunarios and comunarias			

Legend:

Administrative unit
(Our research sites)

LEADERS

Meeting spaces

Figure 3: Overview of the administrative terminology. (Source: Field survey. Graphics: Urs Geiser, Martin Steinmann)

Case study: Ayllu of Qullana



Figure 4: Part of the Comunidad of Qaymani, Ayllu of Qullana. (Photo: Monika Hess)

The Ayllu of Qullana is part of the municipal district of Moscarí. The families live in the upper valleys (about 3,500 m a.s.l.) and their land extends from higher altitudes for grazing (up to 4,000 m a.s.l.) to lower ones at about 2,800 m a.s.l. The *ayllu* is made up of four *comunidades*, of which we visited three (Pukara, Qaymani, Saka Saka). Two (Pukara and Qaymani, see Pictures 1 and 2) have always been part of the *ayllu* and therefore maintained their *ayllu* authorities, namely the Alcalde Comunal and the *Jilano*. The other two *comunidades* (Lipis Kayma and Saka Saka) are ex-*haciendas* because they are located on the land of former large landowners. Together, around 130 families live in the four communities (PDM 2009: 8). Until three or four years ago, the union organisation was their form of representation toward higher levels. Nonetheless, in recent times, for reasons that will be developed in Section 4.4, these *comunidades* decided to become part of the *ayllu* umbrella organisation and to withdraw from the union organisation.



Figure 5: Part of the Comunidad of Pukara, Ayllu of Qullana. (Photo: Monika Hess)

Case study: Comunidad of Eskencachi

Eskencachi (see Pictures 3 and 4) is the name of a *comunidad* with approximately 44 families (PDM 2009: 11), located in a union sub-office of the same name (made up of eight *comunidades*), which in turn is part of a municipal district (again of the same name) that groups three sub-offices with 24 *comunidades*. The Comunidad of *Eskencachi* is located in the high plains at about 4,000 m a.s.l. As in the case of the Ayllu Qullana, plots of cultivated land are situated at various altitudes down to about 3,000 m a.s.l.



Figure 6: Comunidad of Eskencachi with school. (Photo: Monika Hess)

Eskencachi and the other *comunidades* of the sub-central are *ex-haciendas*, which is why they are organised as unions/syndicates. On that basis, they have designed their leadership structure from the communal level to the level of the sub-central and the district. The Comunidad of Eskencachi is the centre of the District of Eskencachi and the place where the sub-municipal office is located. Union leadership is historically strong and remains vigorous to this day. Some women participate in the FSMTO-NP “BS”, but there is no separate women’s organisation at the sub-central level. In the district, the *ayllu* organisation has no presence, but it is present in neighbouring regions (see Fig. 10).



Figure 7: Family houses in the Comunidad of Eskencachi. (Photo: Monika Hess)

4 Historical Trajectory of the Antagonism Between the Movements

The antagonism between the NCQQ and the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” in northern Potosi has its origins in their different historical and ideological trajectories, which we describe in Section 4.1. Section 4.2 looks at the current context and the heightened tensions since the MAS came to power, and explores the organisations’ respective political visions about how to articulate their indigenous identities and political practices within the state. Section 4.3 shows that the grassroots have little tolerance for the political conflict between the organisations. Finally, Section 4.4 looks at the organisations’ struggle for political representation at municipal level and at the complex patterns of complementary interaction at the level of the *comunidades*.

4.1 The National Revolution of 1952 and the katarista movement

From “indigenous peoples” to “peasants”: the MNR and the Revolution of 1952

The peasant unions date back to the 1952 Revolution led by the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Guided by a class-based revolutionary discourse, the MNR decreed a land reform in 1953, which expropriated large landowners (*hacendados* or *patrones*) and abolished the system of *pongueaje*, i.e. compulsory unpaid work by indigenous people. The redistribution of land to the indigenous population created a class of small farmers. In order to integrate them as “peasants” into the state, the new regime further strengthened a class identity by creating local “peasant unions” and by establishing the National Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (CNTCB) as their umbrella organisation. This peasant organisation had close links to the MNR regime and was eventually co-opted by the state through the “Military-Peasant Pact”⁹ (1964-1978) established under the military government of René Barrientos Ortuño (1964-1966). The unionisation process took place mainly in former *hacienda* territories, while *ayllus* continued to exist in regions with fewer *haciendas*, and no unionisation took place there (Andolina et al. 2005; Rojas Oruste and Lunstedt Tapia 2011).

From “peasants” to “indigenous peoples”: the katarista movement and the CSUTCB

In the 1960s, the Indianist/katarista movement emerged in the Department of La Paz in response to the Military-Peasant Pact and CNTCB’s political co-optation. This movement challenged unionisation as a project of colonisation that imposed external (class-based) identities and structures on indigenous ways of life. By turning the exploitation of “peasants” into an exploitation of “culture”, it started to mobilise people under the banner of indigenous identity (Linares 2009: 486). The Union Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB) was founded in 1979, replacing the CNTCB and declaring its independence from political parties (see also Fig. 5). The creation

⁹ The “Military-Peasant Pact” was a patronage-like system, whereby indigenous peasant leaders were manipulated by political parties and the state in return for small facilities such as schools, health posts and gifts (Rojas Oruste and Lunstedt Tapi 2011: 33).

of the CSUTCB led to a “marriage” (Pape 2009: 107) of the Indianist discourse with discourses and organisational structures derived from unionism (Le Gouill 2011: 368; Andolina et al. 2009: 682-693; Ticona et al. 1995: 39). Thus the CSUTCB simultaneously focused on the struggle against the neoliberal policies that had been implemented since 1985 and against cultural discrimination. Its core demands were for secure and sufficient access to land and communal territory, the satisfaction of basic needs, policies favouring smallholders, road-building, and market access at decent prices. It also reaffirmed cultural aspects by demanding a plurinational state with respect for, and recognition of, the different indigenous peoples and nations (Ticona et al. 1995: 152-156, 215-217). Thus although the CSUTCB identifies itself as an indigenous organisation, it combines ethnic and cultural demands with a class-based peasant identity. In practice the claims related to cultural identity vary from leader to leader (Andolina et al. 2005: 683; Schilling-Vacaflor 2008).

Northern Potosí: formation of the union organisation with left-wing party influence ...

At the regional level of northern Potosí, a union federation was formed in 1979 called the Union Federation of Peasant Workers of northern Potosí (*Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos del Norte de Potosí*, FSUTC-NP). Unlike the nationwide CSUTCB, the FSUTC-NP was not influenced by the katarista movement but instead by left-wing parties (Le Gouill 2011: 369). Even though the FSUTC-NP joined the CSUTCB, it maintained closer links with left-wing parties (Le Gouill 2011: 369).

... and the katarista movement as the promoter of a break in relations

Unlike the Department of La Paz, where the katarista movement influenced the creation of the CSUTCB, in northern Potosí the katarista movement did not influence the creation of the union federation (FSUTC-NP), but encouraged its division. The *ayllu* wing of the union organisation was strongly influenced by katarista leaders, particularly from the Province of Bustillo. Guided by an ethnic and cultural discourse, they tried to articulate the *ayllu* within the union organisation and formulated a political proposal to integrate the *ayllu* authorities into the union federation and modify its organisational structure. However, this project was blocked by left-wingers, who wanted to maintain a more class-based discourse. In 1993, the internal division led to the *ayllus* of Bustillo breaking away from the FSUTC-NP to form the Federation of Indigenous Ayllus of northern Potosí (FAOI-NP). Five years later, this led to the foundation of the national *ayllu* movement, the National Council of Highland Indigenous Communities (CON-AMAQ) (Le Gouill 2011: 365, 369-370; Rocha et al. 2008: 46).

The emergence of the FAOI-NP was linked to the different historical influences that *comunidades* experienced. In the former *hacienda* areas, *comunidades* started to establish unions following the 1952 Revolution. However, in areas where there were few *haciendas* – particularly in the high plains that were not very attractive for the large landowners because of harsh climatic conditions – the unions emerged only after the 1983 drought. Food relief programmes were implemented through the union federation, which therefore expected these *comunidades* to organise themselves into unions to distribute food. Through this demand the union organisation imposed itself on the pre-colonial *ayllu* structure (Le Gouill 2011: 368, 371, 373; Rocha et al. 2008: 45). This dynamic led to complex local patterns of overlapping forms of organisation (see Section 4.4).

The international paradigm of neoliberal development and the rearticulation of indigenous identities

The founding of the FAOI-NP with its vision of strengthening the ancestral *ayllus* is part of a trend among indigenous peasant movements in northern Potosí and other regions of the country to promote notions of ethnic and cultural identity again. This dynamic was also favoured by the new international paradigm of neoliberal development, which placed a growing emphasis on decentralisation (Haarstad and Andersson 2009: 19). Particularly Convention 169 on Indigenous Rights of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) gave rise to the international donor community's focus on empowering the indigenous population through multicultural decentralisation policies (Le Gouill 2011: 371; Andolina et al. 2005). As a result of this "development by identity" approach, the FAOI-NP received financial and institutional support from the outset, particularly from the NGO OXFAM America and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) (Le Gouill 2011: 371, 374).

Within this broader trend, the union federation too felt the need to adopt a discourse that was based more firmly on the ethnic and cultural identity as *originarios* (synonym for *indígenas* used in the highlands¹⁰). Between 2001 and 2003, the FSUTC-NP eliminated the term *campesinos* (peasant) from its name and added instead the terms *originario* and *ayllu* to its acronym, which gave rise to what is today the *Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Originarios y Ayllus del Norte de Potosí* (Union Federation of Indigenous Workers and Ayllus of Northern Potosí, FSUTOA-NP) (Le Gouill 2011: 375).

Similarly, in 2006, the FAOI-NP strengthened its connotation to *ayllus* by adopting the name Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation (NCQQ¹¹) to distinguish itself from the union organisation, as it considered the earlier term "federation" to be too "union-like" (Le Gouill 2011: 375; Pape 2009: 120).

By recasting their identity as *originarios*, each organisation established its own network with international donors and local NGOs that aim to strengthen indigenous peasant organisations and implement development projects through them (Andolina et al. 2005; Le Gouill 2011: 371). The NCQQ still receives support from DANIDA through the Bolivian NGO ISALP (Centre for Social Investigation and Legal Advice), while the FSUTOA-NP and its women's organisation are supported by the German GTZ and CIPCA (Centre for Research and the Promotion of Farmers). As described by Le Gouill (2011: 372), this has led to competition for funding and projects for their respective grassroots organisations as a means of strengthening their legitimacy within the region.

This process of revitalising indigenous identities led both organisations in northern Potosí to adopt a discourse based on their identity as *originarios* (indigenous), either through the instrument of unionism, which implies a certain overlap with class-based ideologies, or by prioritising the ancestral political practices in *ayllus* and the impor-

10 Indigenous peoples from the highland generally do not want to be referred to as *indígenas*, as they consider this term to be exclusively used for lowland indigenous peoples.

11 Even though the NCQQ is still known as the FAOI-NP, from here onwards this report will use NCQQ.

tance they give to (communal) territory. While these differences are accompanied by different political visions and different processes of producing legitimacy and representation, this does not mean that one, and its respective grassroots levels, is more *originario* (indigenous) than the other. This observation is backed up by authors who have highlighted the close relationship between class and ethnicity in the Andean context (Pape 2009; Postero 2007; Webber 2007). In that regard Pape (2009: 118) has argued that class and ethnicity were “two sides of the same coin” locally. This questions some authors’ observation of a shift from class-based to indigenous-based political movements in Latin America (Van Cott 2005; Yashar 2005). At the grassroots, *originario*, *campesino* and *gente del campo* (people from the countryside) are equivalent identities. Therefore, in line with Pape (2009), we will use the term “indigenous peasant” organisations/population in order to refer broadly to both organisations at their grassroots levels.

Politicisation of the organisations and struggles for local representation

The decentralisation and municipalisation of the country following the Popular Participation Law (LPP)¹² provided a further incentive for articulating identity. The emergence of local power spaces due to the new responsibility for municipalities to carry out development projects led to struggles for local representation and to the further politicisation of indigenous peasant organisations (Le Gouill 2011). Obtaining political representation in the municipality became a means of serving their own constituencies with projects, thus and fostering rivalry and competition.

In regions where unionisation was imposed in the 1980s, the *ayllu* movement is making an effort to affiliate more *comunidades* and *ayllus* to the NCQQ in order to “recover all brothers who are still with the union organisation”¹³. Apart from the Province of Bustillo, which was part of the NCQQ from the beginning, other regions such as the high plains and upper valley areas of Sacaca, San Pedro and Pocoata (see Fig. 10) have now joined the NCQQ. Likewise, the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” intends to gain ground in the Province of Bustillo, where a few *comunidades* have recently joined the union federation together with their communal *ayllu* authorities. Equally, in order to obtain representation in the municipalities’ executive and legislative bodies, each organisation formed its own political party in 2004 as a so-called “political instrument”: the Indigenous Popular Movement (MOP) on the union side, and the Alternative Movement of Indigenous Quechua Peoples (MAPIQ) on the *ayllu* side¹⁴.

12 The LPP was passed in 1994 in the wider context of decentralisation discourses. It put into place the municipalisation of the country, by transferring economic resources and competences to the municipalities and increase political participation of civil society in municipal governance (Antezana and De la Fuente 2009).

13 Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012.

14 Both parties lost their electoral basis after alliances with right-wing parties in the 2005 and 2009 municipal elections. The MAPIQ has completely disappeared from the political landscape, while the MOP still holds a minority representation in some municipalities.

4.2 Two political visions

Before, the enemy of the union organisation was the k'aras [non-indigenous people], the people who have exploited, discriminated and excluded us, but now the indígena originario campesino people want to fight each other, we look at each other and we envy one another. However, the k'aras say, "Let's just sit back and see, Evo is in the departmental and municipal governments, the 'indios' will fight amongst themselves and stamp on each other." But we will not permit this to happen. We will always seek unity until the bitter end, until the process of change leads us to the dream of vivir bien for all (Board member of the sectional central of Sacaca. Sacaca, October 2012).¹⁵

The break-up of the FSUTOA-NP into the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” and the NCQQ (earlier called FAOI-NP) in the 1990s created recurrent tensions between the two organisations. As the quote illustrates, these intensified when the MAS came to power nationally. Even though they were temporarily united in the MAS project to fight against *k'aras*¹⁶ and neoliberalism, they are now involved in political struggles due to their different conceptions of the “true” process of change. The conflict even turned violent in early 2011, when the NCQQ damaged and occupied FSUTOA-NP headquarters in Llallagua to pressurise the union organisation into removing the terms *ayllu* and *originario* from its acronym, and to share its economic goods¹⁷. It has not yet been possible to resolve this problem. Many leaders of both organisations are sad about this dispute, which they identify as the principal obstacle to “true” change and *vivir bien*. They are afraid that the *k'aras* will take advantage of the fights within the indigenous peasant movement and will be able to re-establish control, thus derailing the indigenous population’s political conquests. As we describe in the next section, the divisions between the organisations are also based on different visions regarding the articulation of their “indigenous” identities and appropriate political practice vis-à-vis the state.

4.2.1 The NCQQ: recovering ancestral territories and nations

Together with the national level CONAMAQ, the NCQQ’s political vision is to re-constitute ancestral territories and nations as spaces of self-determination. They aim to recover the pre-Hispanic forms of *ayllu* organisation with their own political, legal and cultural uses and customs and to modify public administrative practices and entities accordingly. Their vision of reconstituting ancestral nations also encompasses the notion of “territory”, which they understand as the collective control of land and natural resources. The organisation criticises the official division of the country into departments, provinces and municipalities as fragmentation that hinders development. Instead, the NCQQ’s vision is to “consolidate” – in the case of northern Potosí – a Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation as a space of “self-determination”:

¹⁵ All quotes were translated into English from either Quechua or Spanish by Monika Hess and Sabino Ruiz Flores.

¹⁶ This is the indigenous Quechua term for rich, capitalist people who live from the exploitation of others, with the general connotation that these groups are non-indigenous and urban (Ticona et al. 1995: 108).

¹⁷ The central claim was that the FSUTOA-NP headquarters are located in a TCO, and that the *ayllus* had contributed to the construction. Further, when becoming a separate federation, the NCQQ was left without its stake in three vehicles, photocopiers and three plots of land; it therefore demanded a fair redistribution of these assets (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

... With the departments, provinces and municipalities, we have been divided. Northern Potosí is in fact two "suyus"^{18]} – the Suyu Charkas and the Suyu Qhara Qhara. Within the Suyu Charkas, there are two "markas": the Marka Sacaca and the Marka Chayanta. The Marka Sacaca is Alasaya [upper part] and the Marka Chayanta is Urinsaya [lower part]. They are complementary. That is what we want to consolidate. (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012)

In previous years, the NCQQ had pretended to fight for the recovery of ancestral territories and nations by declaring *Tierras comunitarias de origen* (TCOs). TCOs are common land titles recognised by the 1996 INRA law¹⁹, which also imply collective control over natural resources (Schilling-Vacaflor 2008; Le Gouill 2011). However, the claim for TCOs has now been replaced by the fight for *autonomías indígenas* (indigenous autonomies). This new category was introduced by the new Bolivian Constitution of 2009. This new mechanism enables TCOs to upgrade to Indigenous Peasant Territories (*Territorios Indígenas Originarios Campesinos*, TIOCs), which, along with collective ownership deeds, confers the power to legislate and govern in accordance with local traditions and customs (Romero and Albó 2009: 11, 16). The NCQQ understands TIOCs as "indigenous autonomies" at a supra-regional level, i.e. as "self-government" – in their case of the Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation. With such "self-government" they want to ensure the "absolute" defence of Mother Earth and the control and administration of natural resources within their territories:

The Charcas-Qhara Qhara Nation has the mission of defending natural resources. Besides absolute defence of our Mother Earth, it also has the central mission of enjoying full self-determination. Our authorities can govern... So we have always seen autonomies as something big, in Suyu Charkas-Qhara Qhara... that is why we are the government of the ayllus originarios of northern Potosí. We can govern in justice, also in politics, you see? (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

The vision of consolidating and reclaiming ancestral territories as spaces for self-government is the main reason for the NCQQ's distancing itself from the MAS and the Morales government. NCQQ leaders argue that the 2010 Framework Law No. 031 on Autonomy and Decentralisation "Andrés Ibáñez"²⁰ has put "padlocks" on the possibility of implementing their vision. This law regulates the details of the territorial organisation of the Plurinational State under a system of "autonomous powers" according to the (above mentioned) New Political Constitution of 2009. In particular, it contains the regulations for TCOs to become TIOCs. This law has been criticised because it prescribes unrealisable requirements in terms of the number of inhabitants a TCO needs to be able to convert to a TIOC²¹ (see Section 8.1.1).

The *ayllu* organisation arose as an anti-union movement, propagating that union organisational structures and practices were imposed over the proper *ayllu* organisation. The unions' structure and political practices are perceived to be incompatible with

18 A *suyu* is a territory composed by different *markas*, and a *marka* is formed by different *ayllus* (see Fig. 5 and Section 4.1).

19 This law defines the 1996 agricultural reforms, which mostly aiming to officialise property by granting collective or individual land titles. INRA is the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and implements this process (Rojas Oruste and Lunstedt Tapia 2011: 26).

20 Available to download at <http://www.ine.gob.bo/indicadoresddhh/archivos/salud/nal/Ley%20Nº%20031.pdf>. Access: 26 July 2013.

21 The minimum number of inhabitants is set at 10,000 (Law No. 031 of Autonomy and Decentralisation "Andrés Ibáñez").

ancestral traditions and customs such as the rotation of authorities (*muyu turno*), the progression from lower-level positions to a position with a greater degree of representation (*thaki*), and the complementarity of men and women (*qhari-warmi*; see Section 5.2). Majority voting and the possibility for a union leader to stay in office “until he dies”²² (although in practice this is not the case) come in for particular criticism (Le Gouill 2011: 370; Andolina et al. 2005: 686).

4.2.2 FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS”: “Liberating the oppressed” through governmental power

The vision of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” is to end the inequality that the indigenous peasant population has faced since colonial times due to a legacy of subordination, that has been reproduced by the “entire capitalist system”, which has “taken away our land, our natural resources and our cultural wealth”. In that sense, the union federation’s vision is to “liberate the oppressed” and to create “a more just, a more equal and inclusive society with dignity” (FSUTOA-NP 2011: 11, 12, 28). The union organisation seeks to attain local, departmental and national power by imposing its own candidates. Its vision in doing so is not to replace the state, but to influence the state so as to achieve its aim of liberating the oppressed. Consequently, in the current situation, the federation is committed to the MAS government in order to defend the process of change and to “consolidate our historic project” (FSUTOA-NP 2011: 12) with its political, economic, social and cultural achievements.

Even though the discourses of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” have a leftist tinge, this does not mean that the organisation does not aim to strengthen cultural identity. This is clear from a young federation leader’s statement: “We have to prepare [projects, resolutions] that correspond to our way of living.”²³ This means that the overall objectives of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” — support for smallholders and the defence of Mother Earth, land, and natural resources — have to match their cultural, social, political and economic way of life (FSUTOA-NP 2012). In our interviews, not many leaders have specified in more detail what measures this might imply, but some have suggested that traditional healthcare be made available at health posts or traditional/communitarian education in schools in order to prevent children from being disconnected from communitarian thinking.

According to the FSUTOA-NP’s logic, unionism has a greater capacity for struggle and protest than ancestral organisational practices, since it is the “tool” or “instrument” by which all new laws and regulations have been brought about. Moreover, unionism is seen as a system with a global vision, while the *ayllu* movement is seen to think “just about decolonizing their own *comunidades*”²⁴. That is why the *ayllu* organisation is not perceived as a viable option for achieving change; rather, it is considered to be “impossible” and “conservative”²⁵. This does not mean that they do not consider

22 Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012.

23 *Kawsayninchijman jina urqunaykichij tiyan* (FSUTOA-NP executive. Sacaca, October 2012).

24 Member of the board of FSUTOA-NP. La Paz, July 2012.

25 Former executive of FSUTOA-NP and founder of the MOP. La Paz, July 2012.

the traditional local form of *ayllu* as being “ours as well”²⁶. FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” leaders assert that “before, we were one” and it is their desire to achieve unity once again, in the sense that “there is no evil that lasts 100 years”²⁷. Certain union leaders, particularly exponents from the MOP (see also Section 8.1.2), consider that the separation of the *ayllus* as an own organisation lacks ideological content. They say that the division emerged “merely over positions” because of “external ideas” coming from the NGOs, and over financial resources:

... they have become strong with support from the NGOs. Because of external ideas, they wanted to reclaim the entire territory of Tawantinsuyu,^[28] so that the representatives of financial entities and NGOs would have greater interest, in terms of resources, revenues. So this is what happened, it was because of financial interests... the FAOI [= NCQQ] technicians came to organise the unions, in a small meeting with sardines and some soft drinks. After the snack, they took office as Jilanqos (Union leader and MOP municipal councillor. Llallagua, October 2012).

4.3 “The need is one, but the thinking is not the same”²⁹

We said that, well, if there are two cars with the same passengers and different drivers, then the question is which driver will lead us to poverty eradication, to an improved agricultural production, to the indigenous peasant population being integrated into the Bolivian state as subjects. Which one? We will see this in practice, but this political struggle has not been able to further the aspiration of overcoming these enormous problems in the region. They are embroiled in a leadership struggle (NGO Director. Llallagua, August 2012).

The political disputes between the two organisations is a serious concern to many leaders within the indigenous peasant organisations, to the *comunidades* we visited, as well as to the NGOs working in the region. As the quote illustrates, the concern is specifically articulated around the challenges to materialize political visions into measures to eradicate poverty in the region and to achieve *vivir bien*. The leaders and the affiliated population have the perception that the conflict “harms” the grassroots levels and is an impediment for the stated objective of both organisations to challenge extreme poverty, particularly since the needs and realities of the *chajraruna* — men cultivating the land— are the same:

In Quechua, we say chajrarunas, we are the men cultivating the land, we are one, because we suffer, they suffer, we suffer, too. They have a different form of organisation, but life is one, right? (Member of the FSUTOA-NP board. Pocoata, November 2012).

Therefore, especially in regions where both organisations are present, there is a desire for them to operate in a more coordinated manner or even to reunite:

There has to be respect between the two organisations. We cannot ask either the syndicates or the ayllus to disappear. Looking at the essence, they are the same. It would be good for them to walk tied as a yoke, that would be nice, we would then truly be making the process of change, but this is still merely an idea, there is still a long road ahead (Former ayllu authority and former board member of the sectional central of Sacaca. Sacaca, October 2012).

26 Collective interview with women leaders of the FSMTO-NP “BS”. Caripuyo, September 2012.

27 Former executive of the FSUTOA-NP. Pocoata, November 2012.

28 *Tawantinsuyu* was the name of the territory of the Inca Empire, which was divided into four *suyus*.

29 Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, February 2013.

This is also the case in the Ayllu of Qullana (one of our case study localities), where a former union leader affirms that the struggles among leaders in the district weakens the *comunidad*:

We are divided in the two organisations, here we are ayllus, we and Suragua [a neighbouring ayllu]. And in the lowlands they are organised in sindicatos. There are sub-centrals, but in [the district of Moscarí], there are some quarrels and discussions. This weakens us, because one organisation pulls to one side and the other one to the other side. We are sorry for this situation because it is as if we were fighting, but we will try to reunite as a district (Former dirigente and former authority of the Ayllu of Qullana. Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

4.4 Political struggles at regional level – complementary interaction at the grassroots

The dissimilar unionization process in *ayllu* and *ex-hacienda* regions and the recasting of the *ayllu* in the 1990s have left behind complex patterns of organisational affiliation and interaction. The different local trajectories since colonial times and the struggle for local representation have generated different types of relations between the organisations in different regions of the North of Potosí (see Figure 10). In most regions, while being affiliated to the union organisation, the two forms of organisation have a mutual presence and function in a complementary manner at the grassroots level; we call this Type 1. Type 2 refers to those regions that have integrated into the NCQQ recently but belonged to the union organisation in previous years. Furthermore, there are regions with exclusive presence of either the *ayllu* organisation or the union organisation (Type 3 and 4).

Type 1: Complementary functioning and use of organisational parallelism

In most of northern Potosí, the two forms of organisation operate in a complementary manner, each one with its own specific role. In this region, the *comunidades* are affiliated externally to the union organisation, though at the same time maintaining their internal *ayllu* authorities and political practices at the communal level or even at the level of the *ayllu* menor or máximo (for a detailed explanation of these terms see Section 5.1). In general, the union leaders are the ones representing the *comunidad* or the subcentral to higher organisational levels, while the *ayllu* authority is responsible for internal issues such as solving conflicts over land or communal justice. Occasionally, the two positions are merged in a single person. In the Ayllu of Qullana, for example, there is no difference between being a dirigente (leader of a syndicate) or an alcalde comunal (communal *ayllu* authority). Rather, a “*dirigente* and *alcalde comunal* is one and the same person”³⁰. This articulated mode of operation also means, in many cases, that the leaders take on positions under both forms of organisation, i.e. on some occasions they are union leaders, and on other occasions *ayllu* authorities.

30 Leader/mayor of Pukara. Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012.

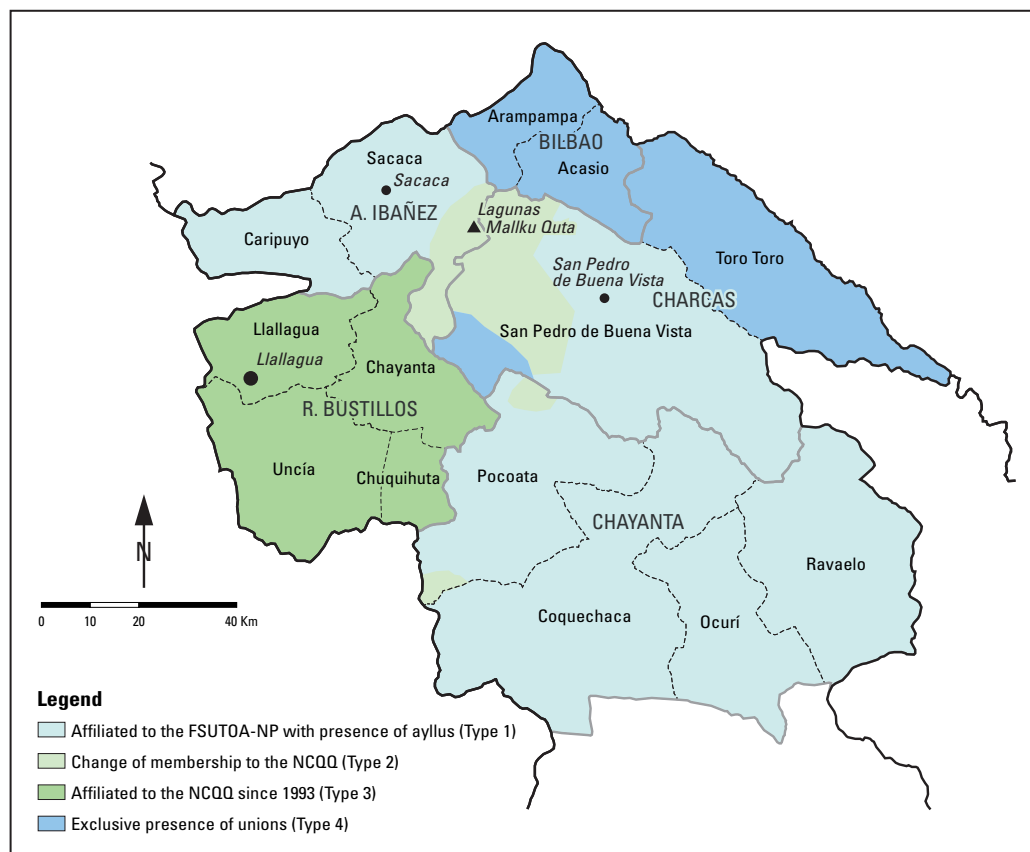


Figure 8: General pattern of external affiliation and local complementarity. (Source: own data³¹. Graphics: Martin Steinmann)

Type 2: Change of affiliation from the union to the NCQQ

Certain regions with such a complementary functioning of the two organisations have recently changed their (external) affiliation from the union organisation to the NCQQ. This is the case of parts of San Pedro (*ayllus mayores* of Toracari, Kayanas and Suragua), parts of Pocoata and parts of Sacaca. In general, they have made an effort to erase any vestiges of union activism through this transition.

What are the local micro-dynamics that gave rise to the change of external affiliation? Our case study of the Ayllu of Qullana provides some insights in this regard. As mentioned in Section 3.1 this *ayllu* is composed of four communities: Pukara and Qaymani, which were not part of a *hacienda* and which, according to the *comunarias* and *comunarios*, have “always” been *ayllu*; and Lipis Kayma and Saka Saka, which are former *haciendas* and which became part of the *ayllu* with the political reorganisation.

31 The map is an approximation of the local varieties regarding use, ownership or merger of these forms of organisation, but there are various modifications and local practices within these four categories. This map does not intend to explain the realities of each specific location; instead, the aim is to map the general patterns of external affiliation and of complementary articulation on the local level in northern Potosí. The information is based on interviews with leaders from the different regions and NGO professionals working there. In the municipalities of San Pedro and Sacaca, the research was more in-depth with fieldwork.

The urge to leave the union federation is driven by the NCQQ. The starting point was to propose to these *comunidades* to regularise their property titles through the INRA law as a communal land title (TCO) instead of applying for individual titles. But, ultimately, the *comunidades* had other reasons for becoming affiliated to the NCQQ. In the first place, there is the *comunidades*' persistent dependency on families descending from *hacienda* owners, not only in the two *comunidades* that are ex-*haciendas* but also in the other *comunidades* where descendants of former big landowners also claim to own some lands. Through integrating into the union organisation, these groups have been able to maintain a position of power within the District of Moscarí and its sub-municipal government. For that reason, people of the Ayllu of Qullana still call this group *patrones* (large landowners). They feel discriminated against and accuse them of manipulating the sub-municipal office for their own advantage, without carrying out projects in the *ayllu* region. In addition, they assert that *patrones* still commit abuses, for example by wanting to sell land within their *comunidades*, although this is prohibited by law³². Since these groups joined the union federation, *comunarios* and *comunarias* associate these abuses and annoyances with the union organisation and feel "controlled by the unions and the *patrones*". Therefore, distancing themselves from the union organisation and conducting the communal land title regularisation as a TCO was an opportunity to free themselves:

Before, we were controlled by the unions and the patrones. We cannot always be the servants of the patrones. That is why it is our understanding and idea – and this is also in accordance with the Constitution – that as an ayllu we can work and get organised and walk freely. As ayllu people, we can follow our own path and maintain our organisation... this way, the grassroots levels are no longer controlled by the patrones and others like before. Remembering this, we are growing and we will reaffirm this organisation (Former dirigente and former ayllu authority of the Ayllu of Qullana. Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).³³

Type 3: Exclusively ayllus

As shown in Chapter 4.1, in the 1990s the Province of Bustillo split from the union federation and formed its own *ayllu* federation. Since then, the *ayllu* authorities have been affiliated to the higher levels of the *ayllu* organisation. The *dirigentes* (union leader at the communal level) no longer responded to a higher union level and in many cases, there are no more *dirigentes*³⁴. In this province the *comunidades* are organised in nine *ayllus*: Chullpas, Kharacha, Aymaya, Laymi and Puraka (shared land), Jukumani, Sikuya, Chayantaka, Phanakachi.

32 The Law of Communitarian Redirection of Agrarian Reform (*Ley de Reconducción Comunitaria de la Reforma Agraria*) of 2006 is a modification of the INRA law and prescribes that lands that are not cultivated anymore, thus do not fulfil their "social-economic function", are expropriated and transferred to the *comunidad* (Urioste 2009).

33 In Pukara and Qaymani, the *comunidades* that always have been an *ayllu*, people also were proud that through the affiliation to the NCQQ they strengthened their own *ayllu* organisational practices and gave their authorities more weight.

34 Five *comunidades* in the Municipality of Uncía (Subcentral of Lagunillas) are affiliated to the union federation. Besides, linked to the struggle for local representation, three *comunidades* of the *ayllu* of Kharacha have recently re-joined the FSUTOA-NP. Near the mining centres, such as Amayapampa and Uncía, there are also miners' unions (*comunidades* of Amayapampa and Patajaracha).

Type 4: Exclusively syndicates: comunidades ex-haciendas

In certain regions, such as the Province of Bilbao, the Municipality of Toro Toro, and the District of Eskencachi in San Pedro, there are no *ayllu* authorities. These *comunidades* only have *dirigentes* and identify themselves as *ex-haciendas*, since they are unaware of the social stratification between *canturunas*, *agregados* and *originarios* that exist in the *ayllus* (see Section 5.2.2).

5 "From the Bottom Up"– Building Legitimacy From the Grassroots

This chapter analyses the way in which the union federation and the NCQQ attempt to build legitimacy from the grassroots. We will consider the decision-making mechanisms, the connections between leaders and the grassroots, and participation in these organisations. But first we shall explain their respective organisational structures.

5.1 Territorial and organisational structures

FSUTOA-NP/ FSMTO-NP "BS"

Here, the *comunidades* are organised as *sindicatos* (syndicates) and form the base of the union structure. Five or more *comunidades*/syndicates together form a sub-central (sub-office). In turn, the sub-centrals are grouped into *centrales seccionales* (regional offices) on the municipal level and in *centrales provinciales* on the provincial level³⁵. The latter are then grouped in the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP "BS" (see Fig. 12). In zones where the *ayllu* organisation co-exists, the sub-centrals coincide with the *ayllu* territorial structure (see Fig. 5). The upper levels, however, coincide with the administrative structure of municipalities and provinces (Pape 2009).

Each organisational level, from the syndicates to the federation, has a board under the leadership of the *secretario general* (General Secretary) normally called *dirigente* at communal level, and *secretario ejecutivo* (Executive Secretary) at federation level. The board members have various functions, for example building links with other unions, taking minutes, administering financial resources or coordinating aspects related to health, education, production, justice, conflict management, and land and territory.

At communal level, the *asamblea* (communal assembly) is the body responsible for taking decisions and electing leaders. Assembly meetings are called by the board of the syndicate, and each affiliated family is obliged to participate with at least one representative. Failure to attend a meeting can be sanctioned with monetary fines or communal labour. At the sub-centrals and the sectional centrals the bodies responsible for making decisions and electing leaders are the *ampilados* (general meetings), and at the regional level the congresses. In these, the Executive Secretary is elected and commissions (see Figure 11) are set up to issue resolutions about organisational structure, position in party politics, land and territory, and social and economic issues. Thus this is the space to negotiate and take on position and principles.

³⁵ The *centrales provinciales* have been introduced recently and are not yet consolidated in all provinces.



Figure 9: Organisational structure of the union federation. (Photo: Monika Hess)

NCQQ

The *ayllu* territorial structure is made up of various hierarchies, with local variations depending on the degree of fragmentation or de-structuring suffered since colonial times. The *comunidades* are grouped in *cabildos* or *ayllus menores*, and then in *ayllus mayores* or *jatun ayllus*, which are part of the *ayllu máximo* or the *marka*. *Markas* are federated into *suyus*. There are two of these in the case of the Nación Charkas Qhara Qhara: *suyu* Charkas and *suyu* Qhara Qhara (see Fig. 5).

The territorial structure is always constituted of two parts: “upper” and “lower” (in Aymara/Quechua: *alasaya/aransaya* and *majasaya/urinsaya*) (Jalamita Murillo and Quiroz Soto 2005: 18; Pape 2009: 106; Ticona et al. 1995: 49). In order to satisfy the production of subsistence goods, the ancestral territorial structure of *ayllus* comprised strips of territory that included different ecological layers: high plains (approx. 3,400-4,200 m a.s.l.), upper valleys (3,000-3,400 m a.s.l.) and valleys (approx. 1,600-3,000 m a.s.l.). This zoning has been gradually lost since the arrival of the Spaniards, who imposed the concentration of production and settlement in villages (Rocha et al. 2008: 41, 43).

The authority at communal level is the *Alcalde Comunal* (communal mayor)³⁶. There is then the *Jilanqo* who governs the *ayllu menor*, the *Segunda Mayor* at the level of the *ayllu mayor*, the *Kuraka* at the level of the *marka*, and at *suyu* level we find *Mallkus*. These authorities take office at *cabildos* or *tantachawis* (general meetings). The term of office is one year, or two years at higher levels of the NCQQ. Re-election is not permitted.

The more local organisational levels are similar to the structure of the union organisation. However, the higher levels date back to ancestral nations and do not fit in with the official structure of public administration. Nonetheless, the idea of the Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation stems from these entities, since it is based on the five provinces of northern Potosí.

³⁶ There are other communal positions such as the *Qhawasiri* or the *Pachaqa*, who are responsible for tending crops.

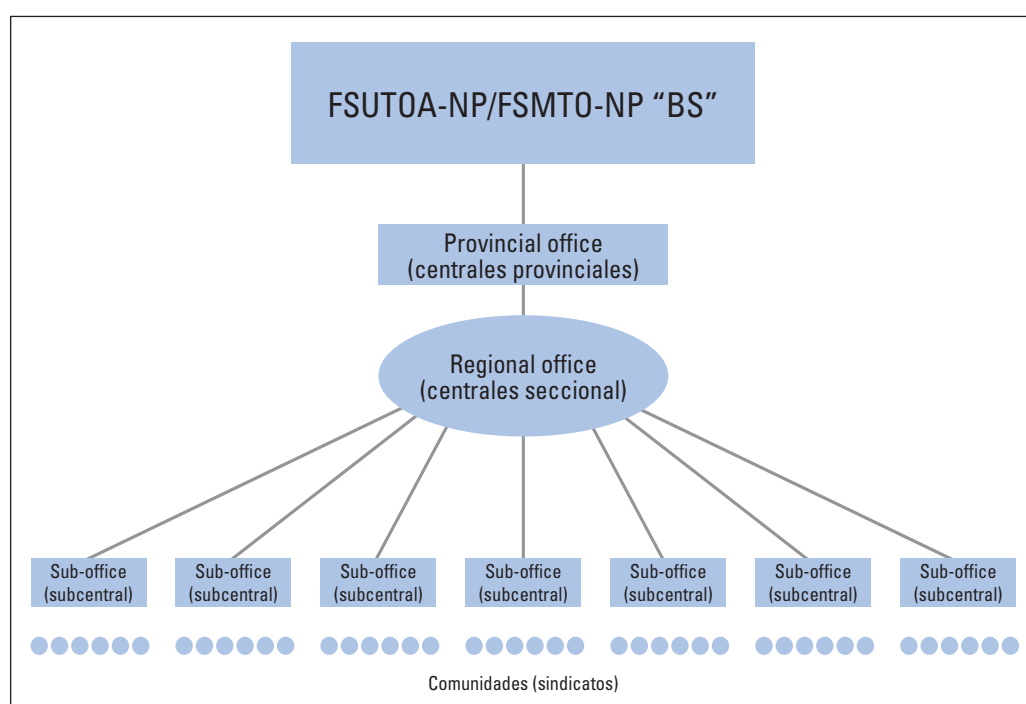


Figure 10: Organisational structure of the union federation. (Source: own data. Graphics: Martin Steinmann)

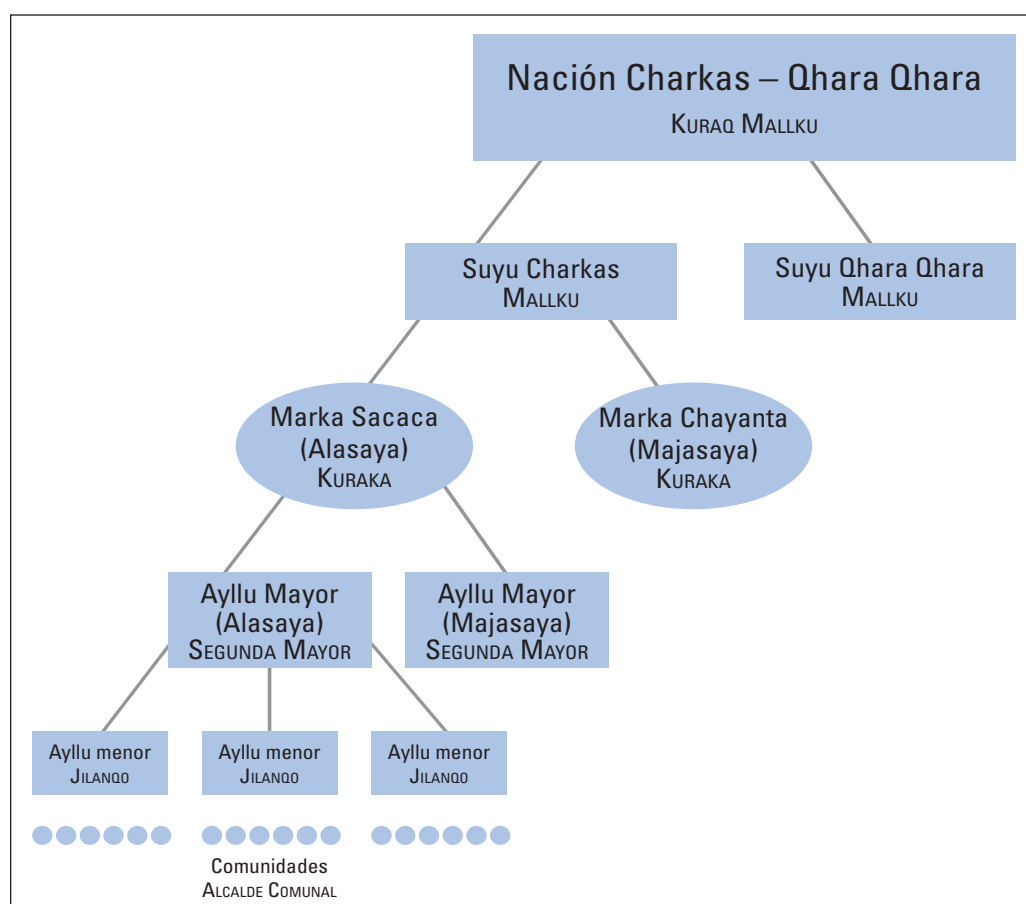


Figure 11: Territorial structure and authorities of the NCQQ. (Source: own data and Pape (2009: 106). Graphics: Martin Steinmann)

5.2 Building legitimacy from the grassroots

As both forms of organisation adopt practices derived from communal self-government, their logics of decision-making and building legitimacy are similar. They are based on three principles: rotation of positions among organisational entities, progression from lower-level positions to higher-level positions, and negotiation to reach consensus (Pape 2009: 109).

5.2.1 Ancestral political practices and the social stratification of *ayllus*

One decisive characteristic to understand the ways in which legitimacy is built in the *ayllu* is the existence of different social categories that structure access to land and leadership. These are

- the *originarios* (natives),
- the *agregados* (aggregates) and
- the *canturunas* (persons at the margin).

In the early 1980s, Platt (1982: 52-55) found the following roles for the different categories. He described the *originarios*³⁷ as the descendants of the first families who occupied the *ayllu*'s "land of origin". In general, they had larger and better-quality land and they were the ones taking office as *Jilanaqs*. The *agregados* are described as coming from families that joined the *ayllu* later and cultivated the surplus land with the authorisation from the *originarios*. The *canturunas* are described as descendants of families without land who were allowed to join the *ayllu*. In the words of an *originario* from the Ayllu of Qullana, they were "taken in" by the *comunidad*. According to Platt, *canturunas* cultivated the worst land in *originarios* or *agregados* and were merely entitled to agricultural usufruct. Under the system of reciprocity, they were required to provide services to the *originarios* in return for cultivating their land.

From own observations in the Ayllu of Qullana, this social structure finds its territorial expression in the structuring of a *comunidad* into different *orígenes*, which are the property of each *originario* and his extended family. An *origen* is the specific geographical space where one family lives and cultivates the land. In the Ayllu of Qullana, strips of farmland extend from the summit down to the riverbank. Anthropologists provided detailed information about the workings of the *ayllu* land tenure system in the 1980s (Platt 1982; Rivera Cusicanqui 1992), but there is a lack of research into the current implications of these social categories, particularly in a context where trade in land might influence these dynamics. However, our interviews in the Ayllu of Qullana provide some conclusions in this regard (see Section 6.2.3).

Rotation (*muyu turno*) and progression in office (*thaki*)

Building up legitimacy in the organisation of *ayllus* is closely linked to the territorial and social structuring of the *comunidades*. These guide the management of the

37 Here, the term *originario* is not synonym for indigenous. In the *ayllu* the term *originario* refers to native families living on ancestral lands. Thus, while all would consider themselves to be *originario* in the meaning of being indigenous, they would not, when referring to the social stratification in an *ayllu*.

principles of *muyu turno* and *thaki*. *Thaki* is the gradual progression from lower-level positions to higher-level positions; *muyu turno* is the annual or two-yearly rotation of office within the different organisational bodies.

These mechanisms are managed according to land and territory. Thus only *originarios* qualify for office as a *Jilanko* and subsequent positions, since office rotates from one strip of land or *origen* to another within the *ayllu*. The reason for tying office to territory and social categories lies in the logic that office is a way of legitimising the *originarios*' larger land holdings and of reproducing the membership of their origin to the *comunidad*. Therefore the responsibility, obligations and costs associated with office rest with the *originarios*:

Why is [the position of Jilanko] maintained if it is an expense? — ... These positions are also fulfilled with what we eat and what we take from the earth – it's with that. It is an obligation we meet (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

According to this logic, the experience of the Ayllu of Qullana shows that it is the origin rather than a person that takes up office as *Jilanko* or, in other words, the extended family living on one strip of land. This means that all persons living in an origin, including the *agregados* and the *canturunas*, have to act reciprocally and contribute to the expenses of such an office, for example for organising festivities. However the *canturunas* and *agregados* are considered as "just" helping:

They are just helping, because they do not have enough land, they are not able to supply the comunidad. The one with most land is the originario, it is he who takes office as the Jilanko and he has the obligation to do the festivities. The others have to help. The agregado helps with half of the money, the Jilanko used to give 10 bolivianos, but now, we have to contribute 20 bolivianos, then the agregado gives 10 bolivianos (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Skills and capacity

Our interviews show that criteria of capacity, skill, will and commitment have been incorporated into ancestral practices for designating authorities. This is because of the influence of the union organisation and the new challenges *ayllu* authorities face, including the need to relate to municipalities. At the communal level of the Ayllu Qullana, there is no criterion prescribing that the *Alcalde Comunal* must be *originario* – anybody with the ability and commitment can apply for this position. Higher positions such as *Jilanko*, *Segunda Mayor*, *Kuraka* or *Mallku* require being an *originario*, but skills and commitment are a further guiding principle of *thaki* and *muyu turno*:

People elect them if they know how to read and write, they can assume these positions. They have to be active and willing, that is important. Let's say there's an originario who can't read or doesn't want to walk, then how would he do this? People who have a good memory and who know how to express themselves [are the ones who get elected], the ones who don't speak are not elected (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Interviewees also presented proposals to further modify ancestral practices in the face of new challenges. Some of the proposed initiatives are related to the eligibility of young people who are unmarried, lack experience in governing the *ayllu* and have not followed the normal leadership career, but are better educated and have other skills that are important for interacting with municipalities (Le Gouill 2011: 384). Likewise, some believe that the authorities should be in office for a longer period of time in order to take advantage of the experience and routine acquired.

"Qhari-warmi": complementarity of men and women

The aguayo³⁸ is the [symbol of] respect for women and the poncho is the symbol of respect for men,. As a couple, we go everywhere. Even though one doesn't talk, we walk as a couple. (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

The principle of *qhari-warmi* (men-women) is at the core of how *ayllu* authorities' exercise power. According to the logic of *communal* life, this refers to the complementarity of married couples' roles, rights and obligations within the *comunidad* and in agricultural life. This concept enjoys considerable strength and legitimacy in *ayllu* political arrangements because it means that "men and women dialogue and together we push forward".³⁹ There is strength only when there is agreement, consensus or assent between the couple.

This *qhari-warmi* principle is difficult in terms of gender equality, because it is founded not on equality but on complementarity, with different roles and functions. The public sphere and external relations are the man's responsibility, which is why men speak in group activities. Women participate in these activities too, but they generally keep quiet (as we also observed). In this sense, Ríos Montero et al. (2002: 127) write that only the knowledge and experience of men is valued when conferring authority, because in the end it is the men who will be the representatives in public and towards the municipality. Therefore, the principle of *qhari-warmi* has been criticised as a way of legitimising women's exclusion from political spheres (Pape 2008).

5.2.2 Democracia sindical

According to our interviews, the principal difference between the union organisation and ancestral practices in the *ayllus* is that the criterion of *orígenes* is not taken into account when designating union leaders. It is claimed instead that rotation and promotion are based on capacity and commitment, the smallest entity of rotation being the *comunidad*. In general, those elected are hard-working and committed and have reading and writing skills and no history of bad behaviour. Designation sometimes follows a different logic at communal level; interviewees referred for example "to punishing" overly critical individuals (as such positions involve an extra workload). In the sub-centrals, centrals and the federation, as well as *thaki*, candidates' experience in lower-level positions in their *comunidad* or sub-central is taken into account.

Between consensus and election

Unlike the NCQQ, which claims to arrive at decisions through negotiation, the union organisation votes. However, here too negotiation to reach a consensus is the fundamental basis for decision-making and for appointing leaders on all organisational levels. This practice is seen as a central instrument of "union democracy", which is considered the opposite of the "representative democracy" practised by political parties (Pape 2009: 109). In order to "elect" the new executive secretary of the federation,

³⁸ An '*aguayo*' is a woven cloth in the form of a blanket used to carry things.

³⁹ *Qari warmi parlarikunchij purajmanta tanqarina* (Inhabitant of the Ayllu of Qullana. November 2012).

for example, on the eve of the election the municipal and provincial centrales try to reach an agreement based on the traditional principles of rotation, in this case between provinces. Participants generally respect these agreements and vote for the decision taken beforehand. Hence, the negotiation is the basis for decision-making, while the election merely serves to legitimise prior agreements.

An illustration of how the union federation merges practices of consensus-building and voting – in the words of a leader “electing with consensus” – is the way in which the new executive secretary was designated in late 2012 at the congress held in Poco-ata, which we were allowed to observe. Prior to the election, there was a plenary vote on the election mechanisms, i.e. to choose between election by acclamation or by secret ballot. The secret ballot mechanism won by a majority. This was not convenient for the group from the far north, as it had united behind the candidate from Sacaca by secret ballot, and there was therefore a greater risk of members not voting in line with the pre-election agreement. Nonetheless, the leaders of different municipalities negotiated an intermediate solution between acclamation and secret ballot (a union leader later sarcastically described this as a “transparent secret ballot”). This solution consisted of each candidate having an individual ballot box placed behind him. Banners initially concealed the tables, but it was possible to see for whom people were voting for (see Figure 14).



Figure 12: Voting procedure during the union federation congress. (Photo: Monika Hess)

Gender equity: "They should no longer keep quiet"

The union organisation's vision is to seek gender equity and equal opportunities for men and women. Initially, the organisation was mixed, but in 2008 a separate women's union federation was set up, called the FSMTO-NP "BS", which is also known as the Bartolinas in honour of the historic indigenous resistance fighter Bartolina Sisa. One female activist saw the need for women to meet separately because "they were afraid to speak among the men". Therefore, they suggested strengthening female participation in political processes through capacity-building. In general, the women leaders are opposed to the political practice of the *ayllu* because of the qhari-warmi principle (see Section 5.2.1) whereby women only participate to "accompany men" without the right "to speak nor to vote".⁴⁰ However, there is still an ongoing internal discussion as to whether a separate women's organisation is the appropriate solution. A former woman board member wants the organisation to be mixed because for her, gender equity would mean that a woman would become the leader of the whole organisation:

From my personal point of view, it was better to have a joint mixed organisation, because we talk about equal rights. That does not mean that men should take one road, and women a different road. I would have been proud to have a woman executive... it is said that women are afraid of men. Well, I don't know, because here [in the women's congress], women do not speak a lot either (Former female FSUTOA-NP board member. Sacaca, October 2012).

In the *comunidades*, the pursuit of gender equality often clashes with the practices of gender complementarity (*quari warmi*). For example, although the assemblies and other events are formally open for female participation and even though women can take office, it is often difficult for them to attend because they have the daily responsibility for herding the animals, among other things. So in general women only participate when their husbands are absent (Pape 2009).

It seems that in recent years female participation in both the union organisation and in government spaces has increased as a result of national policies promoting equal rights. Thus one woman leader referred to the lifting of certain cultural barriers that used to hinder their participation:

From our home, there are cultural issues, details such as the men saying "sure, we support you, go and take part in the training, go and attend the congress", but that's everything. But when we have to support the men, we women even prepare meals and when they come back, we wash their clothes. Women do not have that type of support. The only support we get is limited to the men saying, "We support you." These matters are very negative; they are related to cultural matters. But, slowly, things are changing. Some men now help to cook, and women are no longer afraid to tell the men that they should help cook meals. Before, it was forbidden for the women to ask the men to cook (Former female FSUTOA-NP board member. Sacaca, October 2012).

5.2.3 Principles of good leadership: "service" to the *comunidad*

We have described the organisations' principle for choosing leaders and taking decisions from "the bottom up". In a similar way, this principle guides the role of *ayllu* union leaders and authorities, which is seen as selfless "service" to the *comunidad*, the *ayllu* or the sub-central.

⁴⁰ Group interview with leaders of the FSMTO-NP "BS". Caripuyo, October 2012.

"Service", "commitment" and "heart"

Such "service" mainly includes relations with the municipality (see Section 7.1), but also involves communicating with NGOs and seeking funds and projects for their own *comunidades*. This often means repeated long walks to the municipal centre village in order to claim, monitor or follow up on projects. In that sense, a former leader of the union organisation and current *ayllu* authority sees the role of the communal leader as being that of a "spokesperson" who has to "submit proposals for projects" of a *comunidad* toward the state and other development entities:

The organisation unites a comunidad if we look at the comunal level. In order to obtain projects, to satisfy needs of the comunidad, so they submit proposals for projects from where they can become them. This is what they do. They are like the spokesperson of a comunidad towards an institution or the government (Former executive of the sectional central of Chayanta and current Kuraka. Pocoata, November 2012).

The expression "when someone gains office, he has to comply and he has to walk because we will not be his dog"⁴¹ is often used to describe people's expectations of a leader. "To comply" and "to walk" are verbs that summarise the services a person renders when he is elected to a position. "To comply" in the sense of doing what he has to do in accordance with the responsibilities of the position; "to walk" in the sense of managing, channelling, requesting and obtaining what the *comunidad* needs. Likewise, as part of his obligations, the leader has to participate in internal or municipal activities, receive training and inform his *comunidad*.

The common phrase used to refer to a leader's sacrifices in relation to an office is "supporting cold and wind, with food or without food".⁴² This refers to the commitment and effort required to accomplish a mission, because besides investing time and money, leaders often have to put up with criticism and comments, and make long walks, even when they feel hungry, cold and thirsty. The phrases "being able or not, but we came here, and it is working what we will do"⁴³ or "fastening our belt, we will take this on"⁴⁴ show that when they take on a position of responsibility, people need to have the willpower and the determination to comply with the office whatever difficulties may arise. Therefore, another central consideration when appointing a leader is that he has "a good heart" and "loves the organisation".⁴⁵

41 *Nombrasqa junt'anapaj purinap'aj, alquykichu kayku* (Member of the Ayllu of Qullana. November 2012; women's congress Sacaca, October 2012)

42 *Chirita wayrata muchuspa, miquisqa mana miquisqa* (common expression used by historical leaders, both men and women).

43 *Atin mana atin jamuyku llana'asqaykuchari* (Woman leader recently elected in the women's congress. Sacaca, October 2012).

44 *Cintura mat'irikuspa yaykuna* (Women's congress. Sacaca, October 2012).

45 *Pitaj allin sunquyuj, pitaj munakun kay organizaciunta* (Former woman executive in the women's congress. Sacaca, October 2012).

"We are merely the leaders, the grassroots decide"⁴⁶

Phrases like "the positions have to find us"⁴⁷ or "what you [the grassroots level] say is what we too will say"⁴⁸ show the principle of sovereign decision-making at the grassroots. A leader has to serve and respect the decisions of the group:

The idea is to genuinely work, with commitment in order to ensure progress of the organisation with unity, without personal or financial interests. We women say that positions have to find us instead of us seeking office. At the same time, we women feel that we are in the vanguard of the process of change and we will not permit failure of the process of change, because we have no other personal or financial interests (Executive leader of the FSMTO-NP "BS". Sacaca, October 2012).

Grassroots participation is assured by evaluating the leaders' performance. Leaders of higher positions (be it in the NCQQ or the union organisation) are obliged to inform the grassroots about their administration's achievements and challenges, and people can make positive and negative observations. This practice of evaluation may lead to harsh statements from the grassroots, and there are cases where leaders have been replaced because their conduct was perceived to be negative. This has been the case for leaders of both organisations involved in the Mallku Khota conflict. A union leader in the municipality of Sacaca was criticised for inaction and not taking a stance against the MAS and the government. Local *ayllu* authorities were accused of being "bought" by the transnational company, and they were replaced (see Section 7.2).

The role of *ayllu* authorities

Besides having similar responsibilities as union leaders, *ayllu* authorities have the specific function of administering communal justice (*justicia originaria*). Some of the cases they consider are damage by animals to crops and the repairs to be made, and inter- and intra-family problems. They also have to safeguard *ayllu* territory, including all its inhabitants. Likewise, they direct ceremonies and rituals, and they perform festivities for the *ayllu*. Unlike union leaders, the authorities of the communal self-government in the *ayllu* system carry symbols of authority to govern: a poncho (man's blanket), a hat, a *ch'uspa* (bag to carry coca leaf) and a *chicote* (whip):

... The dirigente [union leader] is like any grassroots member, he does not wear a poncho or carry a chicote. In the ayllu, we tell him that "he walks around just like the grassroots people", because ayllu authorities normally wear a poncho, a hat and carry a chicote and ch'uspa. Dirigentes, though, walk around carrying but the minute book (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

5.3 Comparing the organisations

So far this chapter has analysed the mechanisms that generate legitimacy between the leaders and grassroots of both organisations. On the basis of this analysis, we can affirm that both are deeply rooted at grassroots level. Each uses mechanisms for

46 Member of the FSUTOA-NP board. La Paz, July 2012.

47 *Mana karguta mask'anachu sino cargu mask'anawanchis tiyan* (Executive newly elected in the women's congress. Sacaca, October 2012).

48 *Qankunaj nisqaykichista ñuqaykupis nisqayku* (Women's congress. Sacaca, October 2012).

decision-making and designating leaders that stem from communal practices of self-government, particularly consensus-building, rotation of office and the progression from lower to higher office.

But the differences in generating legitimacy — in the *ayllu* on the basis of land and territory, in the union organisation on the basis of capacity — have implications regarding the exclusion of people from leadership. Our insights indicate that the access to leadership of a *comunidad* or sub-central is more inclusive in the union organisation, because anyone who is prepared and committed can be a leader from communal up to regional level. In the *ayllu* organisation, leadership is tied to social categories, and therefore *agregados* and *canturunas* are excluded from senior office — e.g. as *Jil-anqo*, *Segunda Mayor*, *Kuraka* or *Mallku*. Andolina et al. (2005: 683) have considered this a “limited direct democracy”.

We argue that it is important to differentiate between the local and the regional level. For higher offices such as *Kuraka* and *Mallku*, which bring power and reputation — or in the case of the *Kuraq Mallkus* even with new livelihood possibilities as they come to live in the city of Llallagua — *agregados* and *canturunas* are excluded from these offices. From our local observation in the *Ayllu Qullana*, we found that being a *Jil-anqo* is first and foremost a “service” to the *ayllu* and its *comunidades*, which implies obligations, costs and efforts. So people have to “accept” when “it is my turn”. Thus, while the existence of three social categories is clearly an expression of social inequalities, the impossibility of accessing the office of *agregados* and *canturunas* is also a ‘liberation’ from additional workload and expenses rather than ‘exclusion’ *per se*.

In order to understand the logic of representation and participation of women, it is necessary to understand the organisations’ approaches concerning the relationship between men and women. The NCQQ applies the principle of gender complementarity (*quari-warmi*) in political and organisational spaces. The task of representation and speaking in public is mostly male and, although women participate, they do not normally speak. Pape (2008: 49) has considered this principle to be an exclusion of women from political life and has questioned the idea that private decisions are taken jointly by men and women. Pape has also shown that women feel excluded as a result of the *quari-warmi* principle and that their knowledge of political processes is very limited.

On the other hand, the union organisation has the vision of attaining gender equality, which is why it formed an exclusively women’s federation. Although female participation seems to be broader in this case, at communal level the idea of equality often collides with *quari-warmi* practices.

A lack of representation of the most marginalised?

The literature on the roles of social movements in development has highlighted the low representation of the most marginalised or poorest sections as a limitation. Bebbington (2007) and Cleaver (2005) have argued that low income and limited time availability prevent the poorest from participating in political mobilisation and making their voices heard. Both organisations in northern Potosí emerge from the *comunidades* as instruments for self-government and for channelling demands to the local

state. In general, all families in a *comunidad* seem to benefit from these instruments as non-participation or non-commitment is sanctioned in communal assemblies as a way to preventing opportunism.

However, in the case of the *ayllus* and their three social categories, further research is required into issues of exclusion and dependency. In particular, there is no information available on the contemporary socio-economic dynamics and differences between the three social categories. For that reason, research needs to be done on the micro powers that are active within an *origen* and within a *comunidad* – for example the extent to which *agregados* and *canturunas* depend on the *originarios*, and the disadvantages they suffer from not being able to govern an *ayllu* or to access senior-position offices within the NCQQ.

6 Indigenous Peasant Organisations in Search of 'Development'

This chapter examines the conceptions of development and *vivir bien*, both at the grassroots and within the organisations. Section 6.1 discusses how the organisations' visions of development are embedded in their wider political visions. Looking at the communitarian and agricultural livelihoods in our case study localities, Section 6.2 then examines the expectations upon "development" at the grassroots. Later, in Chapter 7, we focus on the organisations' strategies to materialise these visions. We illustrate this through two examples: first, influence on the municipalities and second, the conflicting and contested interests over mining in Mallku Khota.

6.1 Visions of development

Both organisations perceive northern Potosí as an "extremely poor" region and consider this to be their main challenge. The two organisations' visions of "development" as well as their understanding of *vivir bien* are embedded in different political visions of how society at large should be organised so as to eradicate poverty. The NCQQ views the reclaiming of ancestral nations and territories as spaces of self-government is indispensable for progress and any development. The FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP "BS", on the other hand, aim to fight poverty by capturing the existing state and the implementation of "public policies".

NCQQ: "self-government" and "to live as we do"

The concepts of "development" and the understanding of *vivir bien* of the NCQQ are linked to their political objective of recovering ancestral territories with their own political, juridical and cultural practices (see Section 4.2.1). Development is seen as an integrated part of the recovery of ancestral territories, as a guarantee for the "absolute" defence of Mother Earth and natural resources, as well as cultural customs and political practices. According to the *Kuraka* of the Marka Sacaca and important leader in the mobilisation against the transnational company in Mallku Khota (see Section 7.2), "there will be no own development with cultural identity as long as there is no reconstitution" since this would allow indigenous peoples to achieve "self-government", their "own justice" and especially their "own economy". According to the *Kuraq Mallku* of the NCQQ, *vivir bien* is not about "having money" but about living "as we do", in "harmony" and without "outside contamination":

The objective is for northern Potosí to overcome poverty, right? That is why the organisation was founded... As an organisation we are thinking of recovering the ancestral customs, our clothes, language, as well as the customs we had before. We also know this as vivir bien, because vivir bien is the proposal of the FAOI [=NCQQ]... For us vivir bien is not about having money. And it is not about living in buildings either. For us, vivir bien is to live as we do, according to our customs, vivir bien is also about not being affected by contamination. Vivir bien is to live outside contamination, to live in harmony, in peace (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

The vision of recovering ancestral customs and “to live as we do” is not contrary to the possibility for “productive development” as long as the existing forms of production can continue and are “complemented” by “some” new agricultural technologies. The central emphasis of development projects should be on production, because it is “the most important thing to overcome poverty; without production, we cannot live, we cannot eat”⁴⁹. In that perspective, improvements to production enable people to live with “a good roof”, i.e. to have access to basic services and to goods that subsistence agriculture cannot provide. “To live as we do”, however, implies that such “complementing” takes place under the principle of absolute “non-contamination” of Mother Earth and with respect for cultural practices and customs:

How can we understand, is vivir bien about 'living as we do', and at the same time the objective of overcoming poverty? — Well, the objective is to overcome poverty with production. With productive development, and without contamination. In this sense, the FAOI-NP has always defended Mother Earth, the natural resources. So, clearly, we can complement with some technologies. But no more. No. Contaminate, ruining our hills, no. As Charkas-Qhara Qhara, that is not something we do (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS”: “Liberate the oppressed” through “integrated development”

Having emerged as a leftist instrument of liberation from *patrones* in the 1950s, poverty continues to be understood as a result of subordination since colonial times and the “entire capitalist system” (FSUTOA-NP 2011: 11). According to the leftist discourse, the liberation of the oppressed is pursued by obtaining state power and transforming the existing local, departmental and national state authorities into an institution that secures equity and access to means of livelihood for all. More concretely, the aim is to influence the state so that it designs “public policies” that pursue an “integral development approach” (FSUTOA-NP 2011: 17). “Integral” means policies that promote agricultural production (micro-irrigation, local processing and adding value, and better marketing) and the access to basic needs (education, health, roads, sanitation and water). “Integral” also means that this approach of state-led development needs to correspond as well to local ways of originario life, and take place in harmony with, and respect for, Pachamama and its natural resources. Compared to the NCQQ, the provision of basic services seems to be given greater weight in the union federation’s vision of development, as the following quote illustrates:

Each comunidad must have a road. Because when there is a road, there is development. When there is no road, there is no development. And when there is no energy, there is no development either (Dirigente of the Eskencachi district. Eskencachi, November 2012).

Equally, the concept of *vivir bien* is more firmly related to the provision of basic needs. The MOP party (the political wing of the union federation) puts forward the definition of “doing well, going well, knowing how to live well”⁵⁰, which suggests the inclusion of non-material needs. A party activist described it in the following way:

49 Former *ayllu* authority. Sacaca, October 2012.

50 *Allinta ruway, allinta puriy, allinta yachana, allinta kawsanapaj.*

... Vivir bien, well, it is there in the text, but we need many centuries still to accomplish it. In the municipalities, we do not even have electricity. We have no houses, no health, no education, no road infrastructure, no communication, no basic utilities. We are still a long way away... Vivir bien is about having a monthly income, about having enough to keep your children healthy. For me, that is vivir bien. Even though you do not have a marvellous house, a luxury house, but a roof under which to rest (MOP councillor, on behalf of the union organisation. San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012).

6.2 Grassroots realities and expectations

We have seen that both, the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” and the NCQQ understand their central objective to be the development of the *comunidades*. This objective, though, is embedded in different visions of development. How does this correspond with the expectations of the grassroots? To understand this, we now look deeper into the realities of communal life and grassroots expectations on ‘development’. The insights are based on our case studies in the Ayllu of Qullana and the *Comunidad* of Eskencachi. We first look at the socioeconomic realities of communal, agriculture-based livelihoods in this region. We then turn to how people understand life with its times of sadness and times of happiness, how people perceive equality and inequality, and their conception of development as “heading forward”. The final section addresses the material expectations upon “development”, which are primarily centred on improving agricultural production and the availability of well-paid, local, off-farm employment.

6.2.1 Agricultural life and *comunidades*

In the Ayllu of Qullana and the Comunidad of Eskencachi, though families are affiliated to different organisations (the former to the NCQQ and the latter to the union organisation), family livelihoods are mostly based on livestock and agriculture. Their farmland and animals are the nucleus of their households and of communal, productive and reproductive life. On their land they create and recreate life and work according to their respective roles as men, women, boys, girls and the elderly. Likewise, the forms of reciprocity, festivities, rituals, spirituality, the *ch’allas* and *q’uwas*⁵¹, and social, cultural and organisational life ultimately revolves around agricultural activities.

Principal crops are potatoes, maize, beans, peas, wheat, grains, sweet potatoes, oats, ‘tarhui’ (Andean cereal) and, to a lesser extent, a few vegetables such as onions, lettuce and carrots. In a complementary manner they breed animals such as sheep, cows, donkeys, goats, lamas and some chickens. To feed the animals they also sow oats, barley and alfalfa. Land is cultivated on a family basis. Each family has small plots located at different altitudes.

51 The *ch’alla* is an Andean ritual that consists of pouring liquor on the earth to honor *Pachamama*, the Goddess of Earth, during festivities related to the agriculture, livestock or human lifecycle. It represents a dialogue and reciprocity between human beings and local deities, i.e. between the human family and the natural family, meaning the place where they live, including the mountains protecting them, the sources of water, the sun, the moon, etc. The *q’uwas* are offerings to *Pachamama*, during the sowing season; they involve burning a preparation of different ingredients, like a kind of “payment to the Earth”.

Even though agriculture and livestock form the basis of livelihoods, local people adopt various strategies to access a supplementary cash income, especially by selling part of their produce and labour off-farm. Families and young adults migrate temporarily or permanently to centres such as Llallagua and Huanuni, and to other cities (mainly Cochabamba). Their urban relations are important for trading their products and buying food, coca leaf and household articles, or for diversifying their income by working as unskilled labour mostly in the building and mining sector.

6.2.2 “That is simply how life is”: times of “sadness” and “happy life”

When there is little production, they are sad; when the production is abundant, they are happy. If they have enough, they are happy; if they have little, they are sad (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

In order to gather more information about the ideas and concepts of a good life among *comunarios* and *comunarias*, one of our central questions was: how is life here and how are you living here? The common answer was the Quechua expression “*ajinalla kawsayvidaqa*” (That is simply how life is). *Ajinalla* means that the situation described is no more or no less: it simply ‘is’. It is what people experience in their personal, family and communal lives, with their difficulties and achievements. *Ajinalla* is not about what should be or how things should be; it is not about longing for the past in the sense of how things used to be, but about the conjunction of time, the present with the historic past. The second word, *kawsayvidaqa*, is a mix of Quechua and Spanish referring to life. Life understood in the sense of “that is simply how it is” encompasses the existence of “bad years” and “good years”, years that bring “sadness”, “sorrow” or “happy life” respectively. The principal reasons for sadness and happiness are directly related to the weather and its fluctuations, which determine the productive and reproductive cycles of the crops, animals and plants on which the households’ life depends.

One of the expressions to describe the “bad years” of communal life is *llakiy/phutiy kawsay* (“sad life”). *Llakiy* and *phutiy* are synonyms denoting a state of sadness, sorrow and anguish. The opposite is *kusiy*, which means happiness or joy. When explaining the “sad life”, the interviewees mainly referred to weather phenomena affecting the agricultural production:

It is uneven. Some years are good and others are not, sometimes there is hail at night, which destroys everything and causes ruin. When the crops were growing well, the hail ruins them and that brings us sadness. And sometimes there is frost, especially in the late crops. In that case, the crop is sufficient only for food and there is nothing left for sale (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

It is particularly in “bad” years that people need to ensure additional income by migrating temporarily to the cities. The *comunarios* and *comunarias* often characterise these rural-urban links by unequal power relations, dependency and vulnerability. In “bad” years, when the weather “fails” and “destroys” production so families cannot satisfy their alimentation or sell their products, they need to send members on temporary migration to cities. As the next quote shows, the need to work in cities brings “sadness”, as they feel dependent upon employers, face harsh working conditions and

are “berated really badly”. They feel exploited in a system of accumulation where they are forced to offer “great sacrifices” for low wages, and where they are “only making money for the city people”:

There is no sadness or sorrow in the comunidad; there is production in the rural area. There is only sadness because of the rain. Going to the cities, to the mines, involves greater sacrifices... Here, we have a quiet life, we rest and we work, we rest and we work, because we depend only on ourselves... Sometimes we are still berated really badly in the city. (Leader of the comunidad of Quaymani, Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012)

Thus, compared to the cities, life in the rural area is seen as “quieter”, with time “to rest” and with no dependency on others. Despite climatic uncertainties and other difficulties, the inhabitants of these *comunidades* prefer the life in the countryside. However, to “being rich” and “having money” is something clearly associated with cities and is seen as something “that cannot exist in the rural area”:

There are rich people in the cities, not in the rural area. How could we be rich here? We do not have minerals or gold, so how could we have money? So we are forced to work on the land, with our production we maintain our families and we sell part to cover some other needs, that's all (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Apart from climatic factors and the need to migrate, people identified the limited amount of land available and the shortage of water for irrigation as further problems. For the elderly, life is sad when they are abandoned and when they can no longer participate in the daily tasks of sowing or herding the animals. Women link “sad life” to the fewer opportunities they have had to gain an education, to participate in the public sphere or to migrate.

Just as sorrow and sadness are mostly related to low production, the “happy life”, *kusiy kawsay*, is linked to a good production:

And when is life happy in the rural area? — (Laughs) Our heart fills with joy when our animals are multiplying, and when we sow crops and they become green, when they produce well, when the potatoes flower, the maize grows well, that is when we are joyful... Sometimes, when children get married or when there is a celebration, we drink and we dance, and we are joyful, although this may also cause fights that distress us (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Similarly, for the people who live in the two case study localities, *vivir bien* is about having a good production and alimentation, and particularly about having micro-irrigation, which is important “to get a good life” because it gives them new possibilities for breeding animals and for producing supplementary fodder and food. In order to achieve a good life and have good production, it is also indispensable to be united within the *comunidad* and help neighbours when they request assistance, to have “willpower”, “work together” and “have *ayni* and *mink'a*”⁵²:

We have ayni, mink'a, we always work together. I also take part in that,. Being together is vivir bien. When we travel, we leave our animals under mink'a. This is something that should not disappear, but it may disappear if people change, if we become evil (Elderly comunario of the Comunidad of Eskencachi, November 2012).

⁵² *Ayni* and *mink'a* are forms of reciprocity and cooperation among the families.

6.2.3 Reflections on equality, inequality and the “sad”

Our interviews have shown two categories of perception of equality and inequality. The predominant perception is that there are no major inequalities in communal life and, therefore, there is no gap between the “rich” and the “poor”, because all “are the same”. In this view, if one has “willpower” and “works well” one will not be “sad”. Even though this logic states that there are no internal differences, the assertion that “it depends on work” shows that there are differences – but in their view, these are the result of people’s “willpower”. A *comunario* belonging to the group of *originarios* from the Ayllu of Qullana illustrates this fact by affirming that the “hard-working” and the “lazy ones” do not and cannot have the same amount of food:

Are there any rich people in the ayllu? — No. — Any poor people? — No, there are almost no poor people, because we are all the same. Your production depends on your work – some have a bit more but others are lazier, that’s the only difference. The lazy ones also earn less in the city, whereas the worker has more money, the same goes here. If you sow with will, then you have more food, but the lazy one has less food (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Similarly, his wife, when reflecting on the distribution of food quota on the Cuban government model, expressed that she does not support a system in which everyone receives the same amount of sugar:

There are many rumours circulating about the government [of Bolivia], they say that “it is uniting with Cuba” and they say that in Cuba each family gets one cup of sugar every week. And they say that the same may be done here, that is what they have told me, but I do not support this idea, it would not be a good thing. — Is that what they call socialism? Distributing quota? — But well, people are not equal. Some work hard and others are lazy,. The lazy ones and the hard-working ones cannot eat the same,. This may cause fights and that is why I do not support this idea, I do not support it (Originaria from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

From this perspective, the understanding of “poverty” is having less food, one’s production being too low to sell a part of it and therefore to have to go to the cities to work as casual labourers:

How do we in the rural areas understand who is poor? — Ah! In the rural area, that is when you do not do anything, when you are lazy – that is what we call being poor. When you fail to help, let’s see, when someone is doing something and you do not want to help him even though he is asking for your help. But someone who has the skill and will to help, because things are easier when many people help, he is a good worker, someone who helps with agility and strength, then we can find vivir bien (Member of the former hacienda area. Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

A far smaller number of people believe that inequality does indeed exist in the *comunidades*. They attribute this to differences of land and animal ownership. According to this logic, the “poor people” are “those with less land or poor-quality land or those with fewer animals”:

Are there poor or rich people in the ayllu or not? – There are poor people, we are not equal. Some people have little land and therefore less food. They sow little and then they have to buy food and work as day labourers. So we are not always the same (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

It is important to contextualize these reflections about who is “poor” by considering the various colonial impacts on land tenure in the two localities. In the Comunidad of Eskencachi, access to land is the result of the Revolution in 1952, when families received land after the *patrones* were expropriated. On the other hand, in two of the four *comunidades* belonging to the Ayllu of Qullana land is distributed according to the traditional *ayllu* social stratification in *canturunas* (people on the margins), *agregados* (aggregates) and *originarios* (natives) (see Chapter 5):

Comunidad of Eskencachi: “Somos ex-hacienda”

Land ownership in Eskencachi is family-based and individual. Many inhabitants benefited from land redistribution when the *hacienda* owners were forced to leave and others obtained their land by buying it from the *hacienda* owner. When they talked about equality and inequality, the interviewees would refer to the distribution of land after the *hacienda* owners were forced to leave and considered that they are now equal in terms of land ownership. However, while the older generations came into land by buying it from the *patrones*, land tenancy now depends to a large extent on the number of children to whom the land is handed down. That is why those left with little land have to migrate to the cities, as a *comunaria* describes here:

There is poverty in the rural area, among the people with little land. The people with more land are better off. There are people who have little land and many sons. The sons eat, some of the children are studying, which incurs expenses, and others migrate to help out. Our husbands migrate and send money; that is how we survive (Comunaria from Eskencachi, November 2012).

Ayllu of Qullana

There are three types of owners in the *comunidades* of Pukara and Qaymani as described above, viz. *originarios*, *agregados* and *canturunas* (see Chapter 5). Studies conducted in the 1980s (Platt 1982; Rivera Cusicanqui 1992) have showed that this categorisation implies differences in terms of the quantity and quality of land and in terms of political participation. During our research it was difficult to obtain information about the current implications of this social stratification, as this is a very sensitive issue for *comunarios* and *comunarias*. Besides, they have no precise knowledge of how this form of land ownership emerged. They say that “this is how it always was”. Nonetheless, there are narratives showing that this stratification results in certain differences in assets and land. As shown in Section 5.2.1, *agregados* and *canturunas* cannot be *Jilango*, their annual contribution to the *comunidades* is lower and they are generally perceived as “helpers”.

To explain the differences in land tenure between the social categories, a NGO-technician (himself originating from another *ayllu* in the same municipality) used the metaphor of bread: the *originarios* had the equivalent of a whole loaf of bread, the *agregado* half a loaf of bread and the *canturuna* one third of a loaf of bread. However, there is a perception that the practice of buying and selling land has in some cases reduced the differences between these social categories. As he stated, “things are almost equal now”:

... The originario is the one with most land, the agregado has half and the canturuna only has a couple of parcels. But now things are almost equal, the ones who had less have bought land and so they almost all have the same quantity (PRODII technician. Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

Most people conceive of inequalities in terms of “we are equal”. In their perception, with sufficient “will”, all can achieve the same living standard. In that sense, they explain inequalities rather with the fact that people “are not the same either”, as they do not have the same “will”. According to an *originario*, it is possible to be “equal” through the practice of “*sembrar al partir*”, which is a share-cropping practice where land is borrowed in return for part of the harvest:

That is how it is equalled, they take it [the land] for sowing “al partir”, if they have little land, with others they increase it, so there are no poor people, it is the same (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

The “*siembra al partir*” practice means that people with less land can produce on the land of other families. However, this comes along with an obligation to share a percentage of the harvest and causes dependency on other families and their land.

Another way of illustrating the differences between the social categories is by comparing the *ayllu* with a family metaphor:

The originarios are the ones becoming Jilanqo, the agregados are the younger [brothers] of the originario, that is how we see things, because they help the originario, that is how it has always been, how it has been since before... then we have the land of the canturunas, the youngest brothers, or the younger brothers of the younger brothers, that is how it is, that is how I understand it is (Originario from the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

6.2.4 Conceiving “development”: “heading forward”

The Quechua expression *ñawpajman thaskinapaj/purinapaj*, whose approximate translation is “heading/transiting forward”, is the one that most adequately reflects the vision of “development” in these *comunidades*. At the assemblies in which we participated, this was the most common answer to questions such as: What is the objective of the organisation? What is the logic underpinning capacity-building, and diversifying and increasing production? “*Ñawpajman*” comes from the root ‘*ñawi*’ which means “eye” and which refers to everything in front of people. However, “*ñawi*” is also related to “*ñawpaj*”, which means everything that is past, ancestral, historic, everything that one went through. So “*ñawpajman*” means “forward”, to where the eyes are, though without ignoring the past, the ancestral and the historic. The second word, “*purina*”, means to walk, to transit, to run, to travel. Thus, “*ñawpajman purinapaj*” means to head or to transit forward but without forgetting the past.

Even though “heading forward” means that ancestral wisdom is valued, it does not mean rejecting “the new”, for example new production technologies or new technologies to improve living conditions. In other words, it means “to value ancestral wisdom, without ignoring what is new”⁵³. Therefore, to “head forward” encompasses a vision

⁵³ Chay yuyaywan qhipa jamujkunata valorisaspasaberes maychus kawsayta (Union and *ayllu* leaders. Workshop in Llalagua, February 2013).

of reclaiming those ancestral wisdoms that are “good”⁵⁴ or “favourable”⁵⁵ and supplementing them with “new” practices and technologies.

The expression “heading forward” includes a circular and cyclical understanding of time and of life. Even though the cycles and rhythms are repeated in this understanding, everything moves forward. In this sense, the connotation of “heading forward” is different from the idea of development as progress, because it is not linear and not simply material. It is about constantly walking forward without ignoring the past. The “past” aspect is important since it adds the idea that the road ahead is not empty, not random, not leading into the unknown and the abyss, but rather that it is based on the path that people have walked and followed before, based on cultural and historic experiences and knowledge.

What are the implications of this vision for the conceptualisation and subsequent implementation of development programs? This cyclical logic, combined with ancestral practices and wisdom that imply “heading forward”, suggest the application of a methodology that values local technologies and wisdom afresh, and then combines them with other technologies. With this approach, it could be possible to achieve consistency and local appropriation of new technologies.

By way of illustration of the practical application of such an approach, let us briefly look at the micro-irrigation project carried out in the *comunidades* of the Ayllu of Qullana. From insights we have gained, the implemented micro-irrigation systems are based on a standardized model, which, although being an innovative design, was not necessarily appropriate for local conditions. As an example, beneficiaries reported that they had problems with the water pipes being broken by landslides (in this area, landslides are very common, and a locally adapted design would have to take this into account). In a same way, the water intake points in the streams were built using cement. However, they became non-functional, as the streams in this area are affected by severe erosion after heavy rainfalls. People thus suggested that a flexible intake structure should be used.

To conclude, the logic and understanding of “heading forward” are not contrary to technological advances or development, provided the ancestral, local or communal wisdom is valued again and taken into account, whereby those who have carried this wisdom since ancient times are the *comunidades*, and provided also that this is not done simply by imposing external and out-of-context “recipes”.

6.2.5 Material expectations on “development”

At a very practical level, our interviewees in the two case studies seek to improve and increase agricultural production particularly through irrigation, by preventing soil erosion and by transforming agriculture from its present subsistence level to a level where

54 *En la comunidad kawsakuy allinta yachaykunata rescatana allin kajkunata*/Living well in the community by recovering the good wisdom (Ayllu leader, Workshop in Llallagua, February 2013).

55 *Allin kaqkunata recuperana tiyan*/We have to recover the good and favorable things from before (Woman union leader, Workshop in Llallagua, February 2013).

at least some surplus can be produced for sale. Equally, they aspire to increase access to basic services particularly in health, education, electricity or roads. Nearby off-farm employment is seen as central to poverty alleviation and fighting migration to cities. In particular, the Mallku Khota mine is seen as a possible source of local employment.

Improving and increasing agricultural production

People throughout our case study localities give high priority to preserving their established way of life with its focus on agricultural activities and collective living and the specific territorial space they occupy. Indeed, there are great expectations in support for agriculture so that it can go beyond subsistence and provide sufficient production for marketing. In that regard, people claim micro-irrigation, capacity-building, reforestation to prevent soil erosion, and the introduction of the renewed or improved seeds that local people consider “tired”. Increasing and diversifying production is seen as “grasping *vivir bien*” as it would enable them to enjoy communitarian life without “sadness” and to overcome the “bad years” without depending on vulnerable urban-rural relations (see Section 6.2.2) for the cash income they need:

We have no money. To have more production, we need water for irrigation, because water is life. Money lies sleeping in the rural area. We can sow all types of vegetables, and we can sell part of the production. Then we can earn more money. Whereas in the cities, we earn very little with a lot of effort, we are merely making money for the city people (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana, November 2012).

In the two case studies it was possible to detect a slight difference in their material expectations of development. In the Ayllu of Qullana, people exclusively mentioned needs related to agricultural production, even though there are less basic facilities. There is no electricity, the road can only be used by 4x4s, and there is no public transport. In Eskencachi on the other hand, apart from agricultural production, which is also mentioned as the primary source of employment, people’s needs are closer to the idea of improving the standard of living with basic utility services such as sanitation, bigger education infrastructure or a better and more complete road system. Recent measures such as installing electricity and overhauling the road are seen as “helping us” and they wish to have these services all over the district.

While these differences to some extent reflect the discourses of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” (in Eskencachi) or the NCQQ (in the Ayllu of Qullana) respectively, they are not merely informed by the *comunidades*’ political affiliation. This becomes clear from the fact that the Ayllu of Qullana used to be part of the union federation in previous years. Although the organisations surely have a certain influence, the differences rather depend on their links with nearby urban spaces. The Comunidad of Eskencachi for example has stronger links to Llallagua due to its relative proximity (3-5 hours by car or public transport). In this sense, one NGO professional who works in both localities said that people in Eskencachi are “more *mestizo*”⁵⁶, referring to the fact that their vision and lifestyle are more firmly influenced by urban thinking.

⁵⁶ Non-indigenous people mostly living in cities.

Non-farm employment: four local propositions on mining in Mallku Khota

While agriculture is a central element of people's livelihoods, people also depend on supplementary income, which they earn through low-skilled daily wage labour in nearby urban centres in the construction or mining sectors (see Section 6.2.1). This is particularly common in "bad" years, when climatic conditions limit production and the harvest provides no surplus for sale or and sometimes not even enough to feed the family. These are the years when they need to send one or more family members into temporary migration. The need to work in cities is perceived as a vulnerable situation where they depend upon employers, offer their labour force for low wages and where people "berate us really badly" (see Section 6.2.2).

People thus desire valuable non-farm working possibilities close to their *comunidades*. This would prevent young people in particular from migrating to the cities and from becoming detached from communal life. It would enable them to sustain a communal way of life by continuing their agricultural activities, but at the same time supplement their livelihoods through off-farm employment. The dependence on non-farm employment as a supplement to their livelihood is the reason why there are various local proposals regarding the exploitation of the mine. Apart from considerations about conservation of soil and water, these proposals were guided by an interest in generating employment and benefits for people's own *comunidades*. A majority successfully supported the NCQQ and the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP "BS"'s aim to nationalise the mine. The nationalisation proposal was informed by the idea that locals and the Bolivian people should benefit and that it was not possible to permit the exploitation of "our riches" by a foreign company (see Section 7.2). Today, the mine is in the hands of COMIBOL (*Corporación Minera de Bolivia*), the state mining company. Regarding the concrete methods for generating local employment, though, different options were discussed:

Support for the transnational company

Despite the NCQQ's strong support for nationalisation, some *comunidades* near the Mallku Khota mountain continued to support the company. This caused division within the organisation and conflict between neighbouring *ayllus*. Some *ayllus* decided to support the SASC (represented by their local subsidiary Compañía Minera Mallku Kuta, CMMK) because it had already set up operations. They had been hired as workers by the company which had, in turn, started to carry out some investment projects of direct benefit to the *comunidades*, such as providing new roads, veterinary assistance, sanitation, irrigation, etc. One leader from this region explained that the idea was to benefit from the company's investments until the "meal was well cooked", then expel it and nationalise the mine.

This position triggered division with the NCQQ. The Mallkus of the NCQQ harshly criticised the local *ayllus'* support for the SASC, but also affirmed that the company is to blame for this disintegration:

The company has co-opted the best leaders, the best ayllu authorities. The company bought their support. This has caused division in the organisation. Others were offered benefits but refused them. But some saw the money and took it, and so division was created, with one group supporting the company but not the other one... This is what the authorities did,

but people didn't know. But once everything came out, we saw the receipts^[57], so people saw and knew what was going on, and then they all turned around. And those people have had to escape, we have not heard from them since (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

Cooperative model:⁵⁸ "For the work to begin at once"

Another proposed option was a cooperative model. This proposal mainly arose in the mining sectors of Huanuni and Llallagua and other neighbouring mining centres, where this model is already applied. This initiative was supported by some sectors of the indigenous peasant population as a local solution, since COMIBOL had not yet started to operate the mine. The lack of timely, transparent and concrete information about the expected rhythms and timelines for exploitation by the state mining company gave rise to uncertainty within the pro-nationalisation movement. Thus new voices started to ask for a cooperative model to be adopted and "for the work to begin at once".

Still, the majority position of the indigenous peasant sector was opposed to the cooperative model. The presence of cooperative miners from Llallagua, Huanuni and Oruro who had already started to work was causing conflict with the indigenous farmers, who were generally unacquainted with mining technologies and feared that nearby lagoons would be contaminated. Besides, there were doubts because the model generally does not promote environmental conservation and, in addition, often camouflages private companies, in which the beneficiaries are a couple of owners, all the other staff being "peones" (labourers). Additionally, unlike under other models, there are no contributions to the state through mining royalties:

*When making an analysis, we decided that we could not be a cooperative, because the cooperative only benefits some people but not all inhabitants of Bolivia, and the resources do not go to the National Treasury ^[59]. That is why we supported the proposal of nationalization (Former executive of the FSMTO-NP "BS". Sacaca, October 2012).
"Hopefully they will understand.... we want to be agro-miners"*

One new and innovative proposal was the agro-mining model. The starting point was that the *comunidades* should benefit from the wealth generated by mining without abandoning their agricultural lifestyle, with "we cannot forget our ways of living" as a guideline:

We are chajrarunas [peasant people], we live from agriculture. The ayllus and unions we have the same way of being. If we only work in mining then we will not achieve good things. We should not forget our ways of life (Group work. Workshop in Llallagua, February 2013).

Basically, the idea is that people should fulfil their crop and livestock obligations, but earn additional income from mining, for example after the sowing and harvest seasons.

57 Pictures of receipts were found in the cameras of two engineers retained by local *comunidades*, proving that payments had been made to some leaders and for transport and meal expenses to enable some *comunidades* to be brought on side.

58 In Bolivia many mines are exploited by large and small private mining cooperatives. These cooperatives date back to the closure and privatisation of the COMIBOL mines in 1985 (Quiroga 2002: 128).

59 The National Treasury is the whole of economic resources of a country administered by central government.

By being a farmer and a miner at the same time, environmental conservation would be assured, especially regarding water and soils, which are the basis of agriculture and livestock activities.

Basically, the agro-mining model could be applied nationally (through COMIBOL) and in cooperative-based operations, but the initial demand was directed to COMIBOL. The proposal included demands for the terms of employment in the mine to be adjusted and made more flexible to fit the rhythm of agricultural life. The assertion “hopefully they will understand” is an allusion to this idea which clashes with the logic of industrial working days as well as with the mercantile logic that extraction must be profitable:

This is what we have asked, hopefully they [COMIBOL] will understand... We want to be agro-miners. We cannot abandon our cropland. They said that when we start working in the mine, then we should forget about our homes, our land, our animals, that is not what we want, because this is our land, you see? The mining centre from where will they have food, you still have to eat, and well, the food is coming from the fields. So this is our proposal, and we hope it will be possible. It can be seen this way so it could be a good way (Dirigente of the Eskencachi District. Eskencachi, November 2012).

7 Translating Visions Into Practice

The previous sections have shown that the two organisations have divergent political visions but represent the same grassroots realities. Both consider the development of the *comunidades* as their main challenge and propose the same concrete strategies to overcome poverty. They seek to improve and increase agricultural production, they aspire to increase access to basic services, and both see nearby off-farm employment as central to poverty alleviation and to fighting migration to the cities. For both organisations, any ‘development’ also has to match the prevailing cultural ways of life and has to maintain respect for *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and its natural resources.

We now look at how they translate grassroots expectations into practice, and this in a context in which the two organisations are proposing the same concrete strategies for overcoming poverty, but embed them in different political visions. We address this by focusing on two examples. The first concerns the expectations upon improving agricultural production; here we draw on the interaction of the organisations with the municipality. The second discusses the generation of off-farm employment and draws on the contested interests over mining in Mallku Khota.

7.1 Improving agriculture through access to municipalities

In Chapter 6 we detailed the grassroots’ and the organisational leaders’ plans to fight poverty by increasing and diversifying agricultural production. Here, the municipalities play a crucial role. Since the enactment of the Popular Participation Law (LPP) in 1994, municipalities hold important responsibilities, not only for providing basic services such as roads, health and education infrastructure, electricity, sanitation, and water, but also for lending support to the productive sphere. In order to lobby for these services to be available in the municipalities, the organisations try to maintain their representation in the municipal governments, as well as influencing strategic municipal planning. After explaining the structure of municipal governments in Section 7.1.1, we shall turn to the effects of the LPP on the position of indigenous peasant organisations in municipal governance. Our case study of the Municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista provides empirical data.

7.1.1 Functioning of municipalities

Municipalities are governed by an “Autonomous Municipal Government” which is made up of a Municipal Council (*Concejo Municipal*) and the Mayor (*Alcalde*). The authorities of the autonomous municipal governments are elected every five years. The current municipal authorities were elected on 4 April 2009.

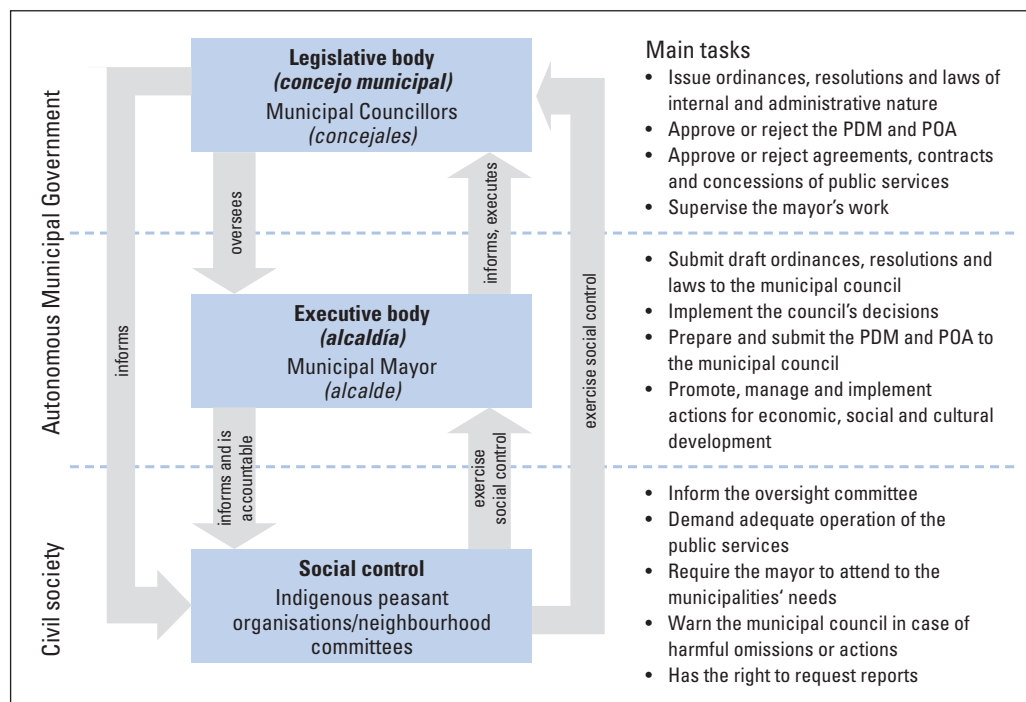


Figure 13: Schematic overview of the different municipal bodies. (Source: own data. Graphics: Martin Steinmann)

Municipal Council (*Concejo Municipal*)

The main authority is the legislative body, i.e. the *Municipal Council*, which has “powers for deliberation, supervision and legislation”⁶⁰. This elected body is representative of the population, since it “is composed of male and female *concejales* (councillors) elected according to population, territory and equity criteria through universal suffrage”⁶¹. The number of councillors varies depending on the number of people living in the municipality. At present, the Municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista has seven councillors. The Municipal Councils have the following main tasks⁶²:

- Organise their board and commissions, set up the ethics commission, issue and approve municipal laws or ordinances, as well as internal and administrative resolutions;
- Approve the Municipal Development Plan (PDM, see below); approve or reject the report on the execution of the Annual Operational Program (POA, see below), the financial statements, budget execution and the annual report presented by the Mayor;
- Approve or reject agreements, contracts and concessions of works, public services; approve participation of the municipal government in *mancomunidades* (intermunicipal co-operations), associations, town partnerships and intermunicipal organisations in the public and private, national or international spheres;
- Supervise the Mayor's work; convoke the Mayor and request reports on his/her administration; supervise, through the Mayor, the municipal officers, advisors, direc-

⁶⁰ Framework Law No. 31 of Autonomy and Decentralisation, article 34, enacted in 2010.

⁶¹ Framework Law No. 31 of Autonomy and Decentralisation, article 34, enacted in 2010.

⁶² Information based on Framework Law No. 31 of Autonomy and Decentralisation, enacted in 2010 and Law No. 2028 of Municipalities, enacted on 28 October 1999.

tors and staff of the municipal administration, as well as the boards and executives of municipal enterprises.

The *Alcaldía* (executive body) with its municipal administration and technical staff

The Mayor chairs the *Alcaldía*, which is the executive body. The Mayor is elected by majority in popular elections. The executive body with its public officers has the following main tasks:

- Submit draft municipal laws or ordinances for consideration to the Council; carry out the decisions of the Council and issue resolutions;
- Prepare the PDM, the POAs and the municipal budget and submit these documents to the Council for consideration and approval;
- Promote, manage and encourage the economic, social and cultural development of the municipality; make available the financial statements and budget execution of the previous year to the competent authority;
- Inform the Oversight Committee of resource management and financial movements.

The executive body (*Alcaldía*) headed by the Mayor consists of legal advisors, an administration division, and a technical division. This last one is responsible for the execution of projects of public infrastructure and of sustainable agricultural production. In San Pedro de Buena Vista, along with one chief officer for public infrastructure and one for agriculture, each district has two technicians in charge. These technicians work together with the *subalcaldías* (sub-municipalities) at the district level (see below). They have to provide technical advice and support the district in its annual planning.

Social Control

With the enactment of the Law of Participation and Social Control on 5th of February 2013, social organisations have become direct instances of social control. This law has abolished the “Oversight Committees” introduced with the LPP, which were composed of representatives of the indigenous peasant organisations and the neighbourhood committees⁶³. This body contains representatives of these organisations and has the power to oversee the planning and execution of the municipal government (Rist et al. 2005: 125). Today, the responsibilities of “oversight committees” are directly incumbent on social organisations:

- Demand adequate performance of the public services;
- Demand the Mayor to fulfill his mandate;
- Warn the Municipal Council of harmful actions or omissions;
- The right to demand reports.

Municipal Development Plan (PDM) and Annual Operational Plan (POA)

The autonomous municipal governments have the legal obligation to draw up a PDM every five years. The PDM is the municipality’s five-year planning document, which sets out the municipality’s objectives, mission, vision and development strategies in

⁶³ *Juntas vecinales* are civic or neighbourhood committees that group interests of city/town people.

the field of human, economic, social and cultural development. The POA is the annual municipal investment plan. The law requires the drafting of the PDM and the POAs to be participatory with direct intervention of the *comunidades* and districts through municipal development councils (see Section 7.1.3). According to experts, the municipal POA and PDM have to be submitted to national entities within legally provided terms, so that the municipalities would not be subject to any observations or reasons that might lead to the freezing of financial resources from the National Treasury.

Subalcaldías (sub-municipality at district level)

Within the framework of the Municipalities Law (1999), the municipalities have implemented mechanisms to devolve power to the districts. Each municipal district has a *Subalcaldía* with a *Subalcalde* (submayor) as the local municipal authority. In San Pedro de Buena Vista, the submayor is generally elected by *muyu turno*, the rotation among the different entities of a district. Submunicipalities are small administrative entities without any public officials. They have a small budget that depends on the size of their population. The *comunidades* of a district make annual plans, in which they specify the kind of projects they wish to execute with the available budget. Planning from all the districts is consolidated into a municipal POA (for further details of the district planning process see Section 7.1.3).

7.1.2 The impact of the LPP on indigenous peasant organisations

The People's Participation Law (LPP) is a crucial element for understanding the present role of indigenous peasant organisations in local development. This law made municipalities local development actors and important interfaces between the *comunidades* and the larger state. At the same time, the recognition of indigenous peasant organisations as entities of "social control" led to the gradual extension of their representation within the municipal governments.

With administrative and financial decentralisation, the municipalities became central actors in the design and implementation of development projects. The municipalities were given 20% of the national budget and responsibilities for providing infrastructure in education, health, sports facilities, and transportation, as well as promoting local economic development through agriculture, particularly irrigation (Nijenhuis 2009). Apart from national payments, municipalities also collect taxes and complementary funds from international development agencies (Faguet 2004; Perreault 2005). In the first few years after the LPP was enacted, the tasks given to the municipalities exceeded their financial capacity (Kohl 2002: 464). However, this situation has improved significantly in recent years (Antezana and De la Fuente 2009: 142). The budget of San Pedro de Buena Vista, for example, more than doubled between 2006 and 2009, especially because of the increase in mining royalties, national tax-share revenues and revenues from the Direct Tax on Oil and Gas (PDM years 2009-2013). Today, the problem is less one of scarce resources than the low rate of spending of the available and budgeted funds (see Section 8.2.2).

Before the municipalisation and following the drought of 1983 (see Section 4.1), the union federation (FSUTOA-NP) was an important provider of development services.

With international development funding, it administered and implemented regional development programs particularly in water, sanitation, and the productive sphere (Le Gouill 2011: 371). Following the LPP reform, financial resources and competences were passed on to municipalities and local NGOs, leaving the FSUTOA-NP without any resources to implement projects⁶⁴.

The LPP not only provided for an administrative and financial decentralisation to the municipal governments, it also recognised indigenous peasant organisations and urban neighbourhood councils as entities of “social control” through the *Comités de Vigilancia* (Oversight Committees) (Guevara Ávila 2005: 82), which were replaced by social organisations as entities of direct social control in 2013 (see Section 7.1.1).

Furthermore, the LPP also envisaged a participatory planning process. The indigenous peasant organisations, from local to regional level, are involved in the elaboration of the PDMs and the POAs (see below). As Antezana and De la Fuente (2009: 135-141) have observed, the establishment of Oversight Committees and participatory planning led to a gradual broadening of indigenous peasant representation in municipal governments. Before 1994, the rural municipalities were controlled by traditional political parties and by the *pueblerinos*, i.e. the *mestizo* elites (referred to as *k'aras* by *comunarios/as*) concentrated in the central villages of the municipalities. Based on ten case studies in Cochabamba and northern Potosí, they demonstrated that the peasant organisations were gradually able to gain majority representation in their municipalities in the 1995, 1999 and 2004 elections. The *pueblerinos* were able to maintain a certain presence in northern Potosí, and conflicts between the indigenous peasant sector and the *pueblerinos* led to a situation of ungovernability in some cases (Le Gouill 2011: 379). The observation in the municipalities of Sacaca and of San Pedro de Buena Vista suggests that the indigenous peasant sector has further extended its power in the most recent municipal elections in 2009 (see Section 7.1.3).

7.1.3 “Municipio Productivo”

In the case of the Municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista, the gradual broadening of local power of the indigenous peasant organisations has engendered very close relations with the municipal government. As described earlier, the organisations hold a pre-selection of councillors and the Mayor in their congresses and use to reach agreements with political parties. Hence, the elections are a mere ratification of previously agreed pacts, as in union democracy (see Section 5.2.2). The pre-selection is based on rotation among districts and zones (valley versus highland), with alternating representation between the *ayllu* and the union organisation, as well as between the urban and rural spheres. As a result of this process, besides the mayor, six of the seven councillors have a track record as union or *ayllu* leaders for the 2009-2013 legislative period.

The organisations hold an important role in the elaboration of the *Plan de Desarrollo Municipal* (PDM, Municipal Development Plan). The PDM is a longer-term strategic

⁶⁴ In order to keep some financial sources, the FSUTOA-NP founded its own NGO. This still exists, but is now independent of the FSUTOA-NP.

document that contains a “diagnosis” with demographic and geographical information, and a “strategy” outlining the municipality’s vision and mission. Municipal technical staff visit districts and *comunidades* every five years to draw up this plan, mostly to update the “diagnosis” but also to listen to the needs of the *comunidades*, which are asked to give a preliminary prioritisation of projects for the next five years. The “strategy” is elaborated in municipal development councils in which the main leaders of organisations from all districts of the municipality participate alongside the municipal authorities and technical staff.

In accordance with the organisations’ vision of eradicating poverty by improving agricultural activity, the vision that our case study municipality outlined in the PDM is to create a “productive municipality” that attains food sovereignty. It presents the central aim as being to increase and diversify agricultural production by providing micro-irrigation infrastructure, new or improved seeds and technical advice, preventing soil erosion, forest conservation, and climate-induced risk management. The municipality seeks to promote local processing, added value and the commercialisation of agricultural products through road construction, telecommunications, capacity-building, the promotion of small-farmer associations, and fairs. It also aims to promote food sovereignty through the re-adoption of local technologies and native products:

The agricultural vocation of the municipality is oriented in an agroecological, diversified, and moderately intensive production, taking advantage most of all of local technology and possibilities for intensifying production with systems of micro-irrigation, soil conservation techniques and agro-forestry systems” (PDM 2009: 14).

The municipal administration and technical staff, as well as the district-level sub-municipalities, play a crucial role in the effective implementation of this overall strategic direction. Municipalities distinguish between a cross-district budget for municipal projects and funds available for districts, which is subject to their own decentralised planning. The municipality and the districts do their annual planning of operation, which is consolidated in the municipal Annual Operational Plan (POA). According to our interviews and to data provided by the municipality, the districts’ annual planning is supported by two technical staff members, who are responsible for advising the district – one on infrastructure projects, and one on agricultural projects. With advice from the technical staff, *comunidades* of a district negotiate the kind of project they want to execute (school or health infrastructure, electricity, or projects in the productive sphere) and which *comunidades* are to benefit. The annual budget available to districts varies according to the municipal budget and is calculated by population size. Municipal authorities complained that the budget for districts is too low. In Eskencachi it was about 300,000 *Bolivianos*, which corresponds to about US\$ 43,000. This is more or less equivalent to four to six family-based micro-irrigation systems. As a rule, the already low funds are further dissipated, since all the different *comunidades* want to benefit. As a consequence, districts select smaller projects that are easier to share out among the *comunidades*. Nevertheless, the districts have the possibility to mobilise for further (cross-district) municipal funds to complement their project portfolio. In the district of Eskencachi, people successfully pressed to obtain 1 million Bolivianos for the construction of a boarding school. They can also turn to NGOs to ask for supplementary funds.

When planning is completed, the *Sub-Alcalde* (sub-mayor) and communal leaders are responsible for presenting an initial request to the municipality to start the projects. After having received the initial request, the municipality starts to organise the process of tendering (i.e. public advertisement and contracting of companies).

Failures of execution: “There is no assistance”

And are there any municipal projects? How do they work? — There is no assistance. There is an agreement with PRODII [NGO], that's it, nothing else. Before, we have received assistance for drinking water and micro-irrigation and recently something for the school and I remember that there were road improvements too (Comunario of the Ayllu of Qullana. November 2012).

Life is more or less; it is regular. There is a lack of projects from the alcaldía [municipal executive body]. There is no micro-irrigation, but if there were micro irrigation, we would have better production, vegetables in our fields with water. This is lacking... There could be improvement. It's good for potatoes, we have some water, but there are no projects. We have authorities, but they do not solve things. If they would solve things, if they would bother the alcaldía. It is like when a baby doesn't cry – it won't get any milk. (Comunario, Comunidad of Eskencachi. October 2012)

Despite the organisations' strong influence on the municipal government and its strategic and operational planning, there are problems in project execution locally. As the above quotes from our case study localities illustrate, people in the *comunidades* complained about the poor assistance they receive from the municipality and that all the assistance they receive comes from NGOs. They say that there is still a need for communal leaders, be they *ayllu* authorities or union *dirigentes*, to “bother” municipal authorities (including those coming from their organisations) because “the baby that is not crying gets no milk”; hence there will be no assistance without recurrent presence and struggle. While *comunarias* and *comunarios* mentioned the improvements in education infrastructure, road construction, electricity or drinking water, they feel neglected by the municipality, particularly in their need for support in agriculture. The local Eskencachi leader, for example, claims that although electricity “can help us”, there can be no “improvement” without production:

There is energy, so this can help us, but when we look at agriculture and production, there is almost nothing, almost no help... As long as we do not have [help in our production, e.g. irrigation], we cannot improve. We live off our crops, off our animals, but things are not improving (Dirigente of the Eskencachi District. Eskencachi, November 2012).

With its two councillors, the district of Eskencachi is well represented in the municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista. However, the district union leader, who is a close relative of one of the Councillors, claims that “it is the same as nothing”, because no projects have come to the district:

Before we didn't have a single councillor, but now it is the same as nothing too. There is no support... Often they only enter the government for the salary, they only care about their own wellbeing and that of their families, they don't look beyond this. So until they get the job, they say, “This is what I will do, this is what we will do.” They say that things will change, that things will develop, but that is what all politicians say. But later, once they are in power, they forget. They no longer listen, they find excuses, and we [the district leaders] are the ones to blame, they say, because we do not ask, we have not fulfilled our task (Dirigente of the Eskencachi District. November 2012).

The district offices (Sub-Alcaldías) are included in this criticism. This is striking, as they are small entities that are closer to the *comunidades*. In addition, the sub-mayor is appointed by the *comunidades* of a district. In the Ayllu of Qullana the disappointment is linked to the district's (i.e. district of Moscari) internal power relation between higher regions and lower valley regions, where descendants of former *hacienda* owners have entered the union organisation and maintain a position of power in the district (see Section 4.4). In the Comunidad of Eskencachi (district of Eskencachi), it seems that the current *subalcalde* (submayor) does not discharge his office. People state that the sub-mayor was "lost" and does not attend events or follow proceedings as he lived too far away. For that reason he left "the budget sleeping", i.e. most of the district's projected investments for the last two years have not been carried out.

These insights suggest that the indigenous peasant organisations on the municipalities has not yet been able to change the way the administration is organised. For the leaders of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP "BS" and the NCQQ, this is identified as a grave failing of the "process of change". In Section 8.2.2, we shall outline the many interconnected factors that have led to this disjuncture between planning and practice.

7.2 Off-farm employment in Mallku Khota

Besides support to agriculture, *comunarios* and *comunarias* demand off-farm employment opportunities that suit their lifestyles. In Section 6.2.5, we described the various options that are being discussed to generate such opportunities around mining in Mallku Khota. In order to understand the two organisations' positions vis-à-vis these concrete ideas in the context of their diverging political visions, we shall first provide some further background information on the conflict over mining in Mallku Khota, which is about 3-6 hours by car from our case study sites.

Conflicting interests over mining in Mallku Khota

The grassroots' wish for nearby off-farm employment as a way of sustaining communal and agro-based life and the specific physical spaces it involves became a hot topic when the SASC mining project in Mallku Khota took form. The Mallku Kuta Mining Company, a subsidiary of the transnational company South American Silver Corp. (SASC), obtained mining concessions in the Mallku Khota region in 2003 and was able to extend them under the Morales government in 2008. The area contains a huge wealth of minerals, particularly silver and indium, but also gallium, zinc, copper and lead, and is estimated to be one of the largest mineral deposits in the world (Garces 2012). When the scale of the Mallku Khota mountain deposits was made public, and initial operations such as the building-up of community relations and exploration began, there was great debate among indigenous peasants about the possibilities and threats of mining. At first sight, resistance to the transnational company and its mining project appear to be based on the defence of natural resources and Pachamama. However, a closer look at the motives for this mobilisation, as well as the conflicting local propositions as to how extraction might generate employment, reveals that the organisations not only resisted the mining project, but also fought to create employment for their own grassroots.

The conflict over the mining concessions erupted in May 2012. Claiming that they had not been consulted, local *ayllus* belonging to the NCQQ initiated resistance and took a SASC community relations officer hostage in April 2012. The conflict escalated after a subsequent police intervention, the further hostage-taking of two policemen and the arrest of local *ayllu* leader Cancio Rojas in La Paz in May 2012. The conflict became a national issue when the NCQQ and the CONAMAQ initiated a march from northern Potosí to La Paz in May 2012 with thousands of participants to demand that the mine be nationalised, leading to battles with the police in La Paz. After the further hostage-taking of two SASC engineers and a violent confrontation with the police that ended in the death of one comunario in July, the government and the protesters entered into dialogue (Andean Network 2012). In August 2012, the government passed a decree that revoked the concessions and nationalised the mine. Today, the mine is in the hands of COMIBOL (*Corporación Minera de Bolivia*), the state mining company.

Debates and mobilisations around mining in Mallku Khota did not break out over whether to exploit the mine or not, but rather how this exploitation should be organised. In that sense, despite the conflict and competing interests related to the mine, there was one basic point of consensus among the two organisations: given the extreme poverty in the region, this enormous wealth had to be exploited. They also shared discursive elements supporting this position: job creation and local benefits, the prevention of water and environmental contamination, the distribution of benefits from the mine, and the defence of natural resources from “foreign” companies. However, differences can be seen in the interpretation of the meaning of “nationalisation” within which job creation should take place.

Nationalisation: a (temporary) consensus between the NCQQ and FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS”

While the NCQQ took on a leading role in the mobilisation against the SASC concessions, the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” did not initially oppose the government’s intention to back the concession granted to the SASC. This passive stance was related to its close alignment to the MAS and the lack of independence of certain leaders and the organisation from the MAS and the government (see Section 8.1.2). The regional union federation, as well as municipal union members in San Pedro de Buena Vista and in Sacaca (municipalities where the Mallku Khota mountain is located), did not react, despite the organisation having a longstanding susceptibility to transnational companies and although the grassroots levels were against the SASC. However, when nationalisation took place, the union organisation gave its backing and even suspended certain leaders who failed to support the call for nationalisation (see Section 5.2.3).

The support for nationalisation from both organisations also highlights and merges their proposals for poverty alleviation, particularly as regards the availability of off-farm employment. A local union leader of the District of Eskencachi stated that the decision to support the nationalisation of the Mallku Khota mine was mainly related to the hope that job creation would reduce poverty and the need to migrate:

COMIBOL should begin with the work for once and for all. That is what we are asking, isn't it? Because there is a lot of poverty in northern Potosí. That is why people have migrated to other parts of the country. That is why we are beggars, and k'ipiris [carriers], they say. All people in northern Potosí are suffering. So how is that, having all this wealth, we have to migrate. So these people should work, we've said. They should come back and work so that we can improve the health situation, education, the roads, and so that the municipal governments and our department and even the state would receive royalties (Dirigente of the Eskencachi district. Eskencachi, November 2012).

The support for nationalisation was underpinned by the claim that in a region with persistent poverty the wealth should not be “plundered” by “foreigners”. This term not only included the transnational company but also the cooperative miners of nearby mining centres such as Llallagua, Huanuni and Oruro:

Maybe there will be some jobs, or more jobs, when it is run by the state, for example. But when it is run by a transnational company, there will be fewer jobs. More professionals would come from abroad, isn't that so?... But the Bolivian people should be the ones benefiting the most, right? But when the transnational company comes, it leaves only a percentage for Bolivia, which is not convenient for us (Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

Leaders also referred to other experiences such as the San Cristóbal mine or the company Inti Raymi⁶⁵ operating in Oruro, where extraction resulted only in contamination, poverty and desertification. In this sense, one young union leader from the Municipality of San Pedro stated that “history should not be repeated”:

History should not be repeated – a very long and at the same time very sad history. We have had natural resources, for example minerals, which were plundered and in exchange the transnational companies left behind their international power, our misery, indigence and contamination. So, today as northern Potosí and as Potosí, we are a region the UN has ranked as extremely poor (Member of the FSUTOA-NP board. Pocoata, November 2012).

Apart from the generation of employment, the resistance to the SASC mining project and the demand that it be nationalised aimed to defend Pachamama and people's livelihood base (water and soil), particularly as the proposed open-cast technology aroused fears of environmental contamination. These concerns were related to the fact that the Mallku Khota mountain and its five lagoons are locally known as a w'aka, a regional deity or sacred place, where the local population makes offerings (*qharakus*) to *Pachamama* to preserve a spiritual equilibrium between humans and nature. One of these ancestral ceremonies is the exchange of water, which occurs in the sowing season when the different *comunidades* and *ayllus* offer water from their sites to the Mallku Khota lagoon, the rivers and the local springs.

We have seen that the two organisations played different roles in the mobilisation for nationalisation, and that this difference stemmed from their competing political visions. The union federation in particular took a considerable time to move beyond its ideological closeness to the MAS and to finally support nationalisation as well. Both organisations now agree on the nationalisation of the mine, and expect it to translate

⁶⁵ San Cristóbal is a mine in the southwest of the Potosí Department and Inti Raymi is a transnational mining company operating in the Department of Oruro.

into specific forms of employment generation. Still, their reasons for backing nationalisation are not the same. For the union organisation the defence of natural resources with nationalisation acts as a deterrent to transnational companies' exploiting the indigenous peasant population and its resources. However, in accordance with its more leftist ideology, the defence of natural resources and the fight against contamination is not embedded in a wider vision of local sovereignty, as is the case for the NCQQ. The NCQQ views the defence of natural resources as a central pillar of reclaiming ancestral territories as spaces of self-government. According to its vision of "self-government" with control over natural resources, the NCQQ imagines nationalisation as "shared administration" between the state and the indigenous peoples, particularly as the NCQQ doubts whether COMIBOL has any intention of investing in environmental conservation:

The FAOI-NP [Charkas-Qhara Qhara] has the mission of defending the natural resources. As well as the absolute defence of our Mother Earth... Mallku Khota is a wak'a [sacred place], a world heritage site, a reserve which the transnational companies wanted to exploit with advanced technologies ... When you have an open-cast operation, the air is contaminated immediately. The impact is deep. So this will cause disaster. When the operation ends, the company leaves, leaving behind the damages for the indigenous comunidades to clean up. That is why we have defended the position of Mallku Khota being administered by the indigenous people and sharing with the Bolivian state... [Shared administration] has to take account of environmental conservation... This also worries us. We need clear policies by the government through the Ministry of Mining. We need to define the percentage that will be invested in environmental care. So, now, the indigenous people will always demand shared administration. They can decide, but we will also decide (Mallku of the NCQQ. Llalagua, September 2012).

The vision of "shared administration" implies that "self-determination" is not contrary to the existence of the state. The proposal of nationalisation, though, seems to be a temporary political solution for the NCQQ, as a means of accomplishing the longer-term vision of establishing a genuinely *originario* administration, planning and implementation of the mine" involving indigenous engineers, investors, technicians and workers, all of them united in a desire to protect resources and Mother Earth. In that way, it is possible to ensure that the water, which is the "blood of Pachamama (Mother Earth) and of our children", will not be contaminated and that the mineral deposits will not be depleted soon, but instead benefit various generations.

8 Achievements and Challenges of the *Proceso de Cambio*

From the perspective of the indigenous peasant organisations' activists, the MAS's electoral victory in 2005 was a "dream" come true: the indigenous peasants came to national power after decades of struggling against neoliberalism and against their own marginalisation. Since that moment "Evo" and his "*proceso de cambio*" (process of change) have become symbols of the indigenous peasant population's changing status in Bolivian society and of the improvement of their living conditions. Seven years after the beginning of this "process of change", this chapter considers – based on the insights we gained into the everyday realities in our case study localities – whether expectations have been met. We cannot of course extrapolate our findings to the whole of Bolivia, but we argue that they provide interesting insights into the complexity of the change process. First, we address opinions about the political achievements of the change and the convictions underlying the different positions towards the MAS. Then we turn to the material achievements of the change and show that, irrespective of these alignments, the leaders and grassroots in our case study localities perceive that, despite improved self-esteem among the indigenous peasant population, the material living conditions in the *comunidades* remain unchanged. This is followed by a discussion of the grassroots' and organisation leaders' perceptions of the dilemmas of making the *proceso de cambio* come true.

8.1 Reflections on the political achievements of the *proceso de cambio*: "Today, the organisation is part of power"

There are difficulties, for example in the past the principle was to have permanent struggle, in the sense of fighting against the neoliberals, the patrones, the large entrepreneurs, and there were the oppressed and the oppressors, but now there is confusion, because today the organisation is part of the local power, today it is part of power. In this sense, the mission and vision are changing (MAS councillor, on behalf of the union organisation. Sacaca, October 2012).

This analysis by an MAS municipal councillor shows the new circumstances for the indigenous peasant organisations since they came to power at municipal, departmental and national level. Before 2005, the organisations "fought" against the "neoliberals, *patrones* and large entrepreneurs", but today, they are "part of power" and the boundaries between "the oppressed and the oppressors" are no longer so clear. The result is a "confusion" regarding how they should interact with the state: the social movements are caught in a quandary between their traditional role of challenging the state in favour of indigenous peasant rights and being themselves part of that state. This is not only happening at national level, but also (as we have shown) at the level of the municipalities. In the 2010 municipal elections, the MAS gained a majority in northern Potosí with most indigenous peasant organisation candidates running for office as part of MAS lists⁶⁶.

66 A minority representation from the indigenous peasant organisations was obtained by left-wing opposition parties, such as the MSM, the MOP or the AS. In two municipalities, Llallagua and Uncía, the MSM won elections in an alliance with the *ayllus* (own research and Le Gouill, 2011: 380).

In this context, the organisations adopt different positions as to how they should relate to MAS “party politics”. While the NCQQ has adopted a discourse of taking distance after the elections of 2009/2010, the FSUTOA-NP – despite internal divisions – has opted for an active alignment with the MAS government.

One key moment in the emergence of these tensions was the conflict over the SASC’s mining concessions (see Section 7.2). The fact that the indigenous peasant population had to mobilise against SASC – despite it being “Evo” in office – has been ground for fresh resentment against the MAS – particularly, but not only, in the NCQQ. Even though it was “our” president in charge, they had to rise up, mobilise and march on the seat of government to resist new attempts to plunder their wealth. From the perspective of the NCQQ’s *Mallkus*, the protest was not conducted in opposition to the process of change or to the MAS, but in defence of natural resources. However, the government labelled them “opponents” and sent the *Kuraka* of the Marka Sacaca, Cancio Rojas, to jail. These events caused even leaders who described themselves as having been “very much committed” to change and to “Evo” to no longer trust the process of change. In a similar vein, a union leader from Eskencachi and MAS campaigner in the same district near Mallku Khota stated, “I think, it is not Evo’s fault”, but asserted that “all of northern Potosí has realised” that there is no respect for indigenous people, despite the discourse about the plurinational state:

Talking about the defence of natural resources is a difficult political issue. There is justice for the people with money. There is no justice for the poor who do not have money. That is not changing in Bolivia. The thing is that the politicians take advantage, it seems that the people who used to be part of the MNR and ADN⁶⁷ are still around... For example, we are always close to Mallku Khota, we are always there and we see that there is no justice. No one is investigating the situation. But they took him to prison... That is how things are in Bolivia, I don’t know, this is not suma qawsay [vivir bien, living well]... With politics they are weakening the organisations, the families living in the rural area. In vain, they say that we are a plurinational state and demand respect for the indigenous people, but this is not happening (Dirigente of the Eskencachi District. Eskencachi, November 2012).

8.1.1 NCQQ: “The true process of change, we actually support it”

The organisation is autonomous, it does not depend on any political party. So sometimes the government tells us that we are in opposition, but we have never been in opposition. On the contrary, we have been protagonists in the process of change. We have marched. We actually support the true process of change. But now, through politics, the government has taken possession of the process of change. They haven’t even marched, they are Ex-MNRistas, Ex-ADNistas [former MNR/ADN members], but they are the owners of the process of change. In other words, the true drivers of the process of change are the indigenous peoples and the Bolivian people, and not any political party. Even less so the MAS. This is not the process of change of the MAS (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

The NCQQ has now adopted a critical position towards the MAS and the government, a rift that stems from its different vision of how to articulate their identities and political practices as *originarios* with the state (see Chapter 4). Their leaders feel excluded and consider that the current process of change does not correspond to their vision. They state that the government is mostly made up of “former MNR and AND

67 The MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario) and the ADN (Acción Democrática Nacionalista) have been important parties in the recent past. The first was the one from the former president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada who is exiled in the US and the second was from the former dictator and president Hugo Banzer. Both can be considered right-wing, neoliberal parties.

members” who “took possession of the process of change”. The central point of criticism is that the principle of a “plurinational” state is not being put into practice. In the case of Mallku Khota, the right to prior consultation of the indigenous people was not respected and preference was given to state-led resource extraction. Besides, the *Kuraq Mallkus* of the NCQQ consider that the Framework Law No. 031 of Autonomy and Decentralisation “Andrés Ibáñez” (see Section 4.2.1) put “padlocks” on their vision to recover ancestral nations as spaces of self-government. Likewise, even though the government talks about “self-government” and “self-determination”, they say that the government itself is weakening the organisation by dismissing its criticism and by claiming that they are “opponents” or “from the other side [right-wing]”.

Therefore, leaders of the NCQQ criticise the union federation for supporting the MAS “blindly”, and claim that the attitude to be adopted by all organisations is clear – namely, to achieve “autonomy” from “any” political party, including the MAS. While the organisation should support a party if it is “doing things well”, it should not “become part of it”.

The NCQQ has always adopted a more critical position towards the MAS because of Evo Morales’ background as union leader. But in recent years the gap has widened, especially since the break-up of the Pact of Unity in 2011. Thus, as early as the 2010 municipal elections, several candidates representing the *ayllus* stood for other parties. Nonetheless, a large part of the political representation from that organisation was still achieved with the MAS. However, support is not assured for the next municipal and national elections in 2013/2014. The *Kuraq Mallkus* assert that “we’ll see which party we’ll go with”. At the end of January 2013, CONAMAQ decided to create its own political party for the 2014 election (La Razón, 31.1.2013).

8.1.2 FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS”: between “party politics” and “union politics”

There is great “confusion” within the union federation regarding its role vis-à-vis the MAS and the government. Since the MAS was elected in 2005, the federation and the CSUTCB have actively aligned themselves with the MAS (Le Gouill, 2011: 378). Even though the organisation had formed its own “political instrument”, the MOP, in 2004, majority political representation was through the MAS. Moreover, some leaders also hold positions in the MAS, for example as campaign leaders or as municipal and departmental public servants (although this conflicts with the union federation’s bye-laws). As described in Section 7.1.3, these relations are particularly close in the Municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista: the union leader at municipal level is at the same time in charge of the MAS campaign, as well as being a municipal employee. These close links to the MAS make it difficult to identify clear boundaries between the union organisation and the political party.

“Party politics” versus “union politics”

This situation has not only given rise to a conflict with the NCQQ, but has also created internal tensions about the union federation’s position towards the MAS and the government. Based on our interviews and our observations at the federation’s congress in

November 2012 in Pocoata, it is possible to identify two internal currents. A majority is actively aligned with the MAS (this stance is particularly strong in the Municipality of Toro Toro and in the Province of Chayanta). The other current supports the process of change and the MAS, but from a strong and independent union position. Our observations suggest that the second current is gaining strength as the candidate from Sacaca, who is more cautiously supporting the MAS, prevailed over a militant MAS supporter proposed by the block from Toro Toro / Chayanta.

According to the second group, the MAS has infiltrated the organisation and weakened "union politics". This hinders the federation from developing its own visions and positions, which is referred to by one leader as the "exact north" (meaning the correct and right path). Those leaders who have become public servants have come in for particular criticism, as they lack the capacity and independence to "respond to the population's demands" and to conduct transparent social control. One young leader described them as "*chilwis* [chicks] running behind the authorities that give them *t'iki* [ground maize]".

One union leader who has a concurrent job as a municipal employee pondered the conflict of objectives inherent to this combination. He confessed that you cannot be "judge and judged", hence, it hinders the exercising of their traditional role as the social control of municipal governance:

I respectfully asked permission from the grassroots to take on this position ... because I am a person with ethics who wants to accept a charge according to legal rules. There is an article in our bye-laws that says that members of the executive committee of the sectional central cannot assume public office. So, in other words, we are violating our bye-laws ... Well, the authorities representing the social organisations, cannot be the judge and judged at the same time. In other words, we cannot be public servants and at the same time leaders of the social organisations. And if we were against the mayor, then where would be our moral either, right?, because we are paid a salary by the municipal government. This has to be taken into account (Board member of the sectional central of San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012).

Some even argue that the *proceso de cambio* can be supported only from a strong union position:

Once prepared, of course we will put our faith in the process of change. But if we are not prepared then what change are we going to make? We have seen that yet. If we are not trained, if we are in no condition, either so we will be able to realize the process of change (Former FSUTOA-NP board leader. Pocoata, November 2012).

The division between the MOP and the MAS

As the political arm of the FSUTOA-NP, the MOP, has no significant representation in municipalities, currently these internal debates on the role of the federation do not question the support of the MAS *per se*. Nevertheless, MOP activists use these observations to present themselves as an alternative to the MAS. They position the MOP as the FSUTOA-NP's "political instrument", which can ensure independence from other political parties. One of the founders of the MOP and a former FSUTOA-NP executive criticised the MAS for being in a process of "grabbing control" of the social organisations and "conditioning" its support, either through the power gained in the municipalities or by paying leaders:

Before, things were different. A leader tried to be as close as possible to the grassroots. He had nothing to do with the state. And now they are in government. All of a sudden they don't know where they stand – with the people or with the government. For them everything is fine, it is an excellent process of change. This is a major issue in Bolivia. And if they do not support them, they will not have any projects... They condition with projects. They are part of the municipal governments. The mayor does not give us projects otherwise. And the departmental government will not help us either. There is no longer any conviction, is there? (Former FSUTOA-NP executive, founder of the MOP. La Paz, July 2012).

In the opinion of this former executive, these processes are a threat to “the indigenous community”, because afterwards there will not be a government of indigenous people anymore:

Nothing stays hidden forever. Everything becomes known. So this is the great risk for the indigenous community of Bolivia. Because one day they will say that those who are guilty and those who are not guilty “they are simply like this”. After this, I don't think there will be indigenous governments in Bolivia any more (Former FSUTOA-NP executive, founder of the MOP. La Paz, July 2012).

Just like the NCQQ, the MOP bases its political discourse on the union federation's strong engagement with the MAS and the lack of response to expectations of the process of change. Hence, the MOP's and the NCQQ's stances towards the MAS are similar, but for different reasons. This is interesting as MOP leaders otherwise adopt a strong anti-NCQQ discourse (see Section 4.2.2)

8.2 Reflections on the material achievements of the *proceso de cambio*: “There is still a long way to go”

... [the social organisations] have adopted the strategy of struggle to enforce respect. And they have now reached their goal. This is clear. For example, the President of the Republic himself is an originario, so our dream has come true... It is clear that [the people from the rural area] have the right to voice opinions, the right to complain here in the country to the government. However, there remains a lot to do, we have to go on improving. I say, we need to reach the level of other countries that have already headed forward (Former executive of the Sectional central of Chayanta and current Kuraka. Pocoata, November 2012).

We have to talk about the changes since the Revolution of 1952. Obviously, there have been changes in education – there are schools in all comunidades. They have learnt some reading and writing. But when students do not complete their studies, they are like half-cooked potatoes. So we lack to fully cook the potatoes. So only when we achieve this it will be the true change (Former FSUTOA-NP board leader, founder of the MOP. Pocoata, November 2012).

These two quotes are representative of the hopes all organisations and parties invested in the proceso de cambio. -The coming to power of an indigenous president is a “dream” come true after decades of “struggle” for the social organisations. This momentous occasion gave them self-esteem and recognition, because “the people representing our ways of life”⁶⁸ have taken on positions at different levels of government. However, leaders state that the expectations relating to the “change” have not been met yet, because the “change” has not been able to improve living standards in the *comunidades*.

68 Woman MAS councillor representing the *ayllu*. San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012.

Hence, the process of change to reach *vivir bien* is seen as “still a long way off”⁶⁹ or a “nice dream”⁷⁰. As we have shown in Section 7.1.3, the *comunarios* and *comunarias* in the two case studies and the leaders of both organisations, beyond their party alignment, consider that though there have been improvements in education, health, social programmes (*bonos*), housing, roads and energy, change “is not really happening”⁷¹ in the *comunidades*, and “there is no *vivir bien*, the government is merely talking about it”⁷². As we illustrate in the following section, the failure to materialise the achievements of “change” and to improve living conditions in the *comunidades* is explained with reference to an array of interlinked issues.

8.2.1 “The government does not see people’s needs”

Some locate the lack of policies favouring the *comunidades* as a failing of national government and of the MAS. This is particularly, but not exclusively, the discourse of MOP and NCQQ leaders, both of which accuse the government of not seeing the people’s needs:

We talk about the process of change. But what process of change are we talking about? Our people here in Bolivia need work, employment. Why is it that so many people are migrating to Spain, Chile, Argentina and Brazil, bringing their house with a good roof from abroad. But we, the others who are not leaving Bolivia, we do not have good cars and good houses. But the government is saying, “Before the poverty index was 60%, now it is 40%, so it has gone down”. That is a lie. Poverty is still the same or even greater (Kuraq Mallku of the NCQQ. Llallagua, September 2012).

They note that even though the government has enacted many new laws and regulations — the “revolution of laws” — they are not being applied, and thus there has still been no “economic revolution”. One frequently mentioned example is Law No. 144 of the Communal Based Agricultural Productive Revolution⁷³. This law takes into account, in principle, many demands related to agricultural production, but the interviewees argue that it has not been implemented yet. This non-compliance is interpreted as indifference on the side of the government, as it is not taking account of smallholders in the highlands, even though it is supporting large-scale producers in the lowlands:

Unfortunately, here in our country the government does not support the agricultural sector. It supports the large-scale producers, mainly in the lowlands of Bolivia. Here, in the highlands, there is not much support. That is why there is no agricultural insurance here. That is why when nature punishes us no one comes to help. In other countries things are different (Former executive of the Sectional central of Chayanta and current Kuraka. Pocoata, November 2012).

69 Former native authority. Sacaca, October 2012.

70 Councillor of the MOP representing the union organisation. San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012.

71 Community member (man). Eskencachi, November 2012.

72 Community member (woman). Eskencachi, November 2012.

73 Enacted on 26 June 2011, the objective of this law is to achieve food sovereignty by establishing institutional and political foundations and technical, technological and financial mechanisms for the production, transformation and commercialisation of agricultural, livestock and forestry products.

8.2.2 “People with *ch’ulos* and *calzonas*⁷⁴ govern the municipality”: “Why have we made no progress?”

We always say that we will bring people from the rural area, that they will come to power, at local and national level. This is what the organisations say, but once they are in power, it is not so easy. So I don’t know why this always happens, I don’t know, maybe they lack will, I don’t know what it is (Dirigente of the Eskencachi District. November 2012).

The question of why we leaders who have entered different governmental spaces or the municipalities have not made progress, is a very, very alarming one because we see that things are still the same (MOP municipal councillor, on behalf of the union organisation. San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012).

We have outlined why some leaders make the government responsible for insufficient achievements in the economic sphere. However, disappointment about the change is not only projected up to national level, but is also particularly visible in the municipalities. The question of why municipal governance does not change, even though the “people from the *campo* (rural areas)” wearing *ch’ulos* and *calzonas* are in power, is causing much debate in the organisations. Leaders of the organisations as well as of municipal authorities identify a variety of issues that contribute, in one way or other, to this disconnect.

Corruption: “There is ‘change’ in their pockets”

There are comunidades that have not received a single peso, honestly. And we are talking about the process of change. We are talking about local power. We are talking about national power. So for me, clearly there is no change in the social organisations. There is change in the pockets of the cunning ones, the ones who are always acting as if they were tyrants, seeking personal benefits (Former FSUTOA-NP board member, founder of the MOP. Pocoata, November 2012).

Both municipal authorities and leaders of both organisations mentioned the “personal interest” of some leaders and municipal representatives as a major problem for the unity and strength of the indigenous peasant movement. “Personal interest” is associated with leaders who, instead of seeing the common needs of the organisations use offices for their own benefit, committing acts of corruption or working as public servants only to receive a salary. A former union federation leader and currently an *ayllu* authority admitted that they used to think that the indigenous people would not be corrupt like the *k’aras*, but now, as they are in power, it has become clear that the *ch’ulo* and *calzona* are no guarantee against corruption and personal interests.

NGO professionals observe that due to their personal and political interests, some mayors do not respect the municipality’s strategic orientation, which focuses on support for agriculture. This is because infrastructure projects such as roads, sports fields or squares are more visible and can be “entregado” (handed over) with a public “*entrada*” (procession – very common in Bolivia), and thus have more political impact than buying seeds, for example. This was also observed by Nijenhuis (2009: 82) as a reason for the low investment in agriculture in six rural municipalities in the department of

74 Traditional indigenous hat and trousers.

Chuquisaca. Furthermore, the potential for corruption is higher with infrastructure projects, as these build on longstanding networks to established companies holding quasi-monopolies. There are accusations that the need to buy contracts for companies decreases the quality of their work, as they use lower quality materials to reduce costs.

In addition, municipal councillors and NGO professionals have observed that the hiring of professionals in the technical and administrative units of the *Alcaldías* (executive body of the municipalities) involves party “nepotism”. This leads to subsequent staff turnover, as well as people entering office who lack the required professional profile.

Internal disunity: “We are fighting among ourselves”

There are still some quarrels, this causes failure [in the municipality and the department]... First there has to be unity, we have to be united as never before, with a single voice, a single thought; that is how we have to pursue vivir bien among men and women (Board member of the sectional central of Sacaca, October 2012).

There is discrimination, there are internal susceptibilities. We are like the fingers on a hand, all different. Also in the departmental government, there are still quarrels; that is why there is no progress, without these issues, the process of change would perform better (Woman councillor of the MAS, on behalf of the ayllu organisation. San Pedro de Buena Vista, October 2012)

Personal interests, “susceptibilities”, and a lack of “unity” and “understanding” among the indigenous peasant people are identified as the main difficulties for the municipal, departmental and national governments. More than anything else, these problems are seen as contrary to “*vivir bien*”. Leaders refer to the struggle between the two major organisations – the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS” and the NCQQ – and the disharmony in party politics (particularly MAS versus MOP), which disperse the electoral strength of the indigenous peasant population, as well as the different interests within the indigenous peasant sector (see Section 7.2):

We trample on each other. In the case of the Mallku Khota mine, for example, we fight over interests. Well that is not vivir bien... And now there are external influences, and so indigenous people are fighting with indigenous people... Even though we had everything we need to eat, even though we had clothes, money, even though we had everything, but if we still have rancour in our heart with these fights. Children become orphans, women are abused, the children and women cry – that is not vivir bien (Female former FSUTOA-NP board leader. Sacaca, October 2012).

A frequent comment by leaders is that a true process of change requires a deep internal transformation of individuals, families and of the *comunidad*:

This has to end with the process of change, people should no longer be lazy, liars or thieves, but the road is still long... But we are the ones who have to drive this process (Former ayllu authority and former board member of the sectional central of Sacaca. Sacaca, October 2012).

Weak social control

Their leaders realise that the indigenous peasant organisations are so closely interwoven with the municipal governance that they often lack the independence to challenge the authorities. Thus they have difficulties differentiating between their responsibility for

social control and being part of the municipal government. Particularly in the case of the union organisation, there are leaders in office in the organisation who also work for the municipalities. This is not permitted by the organisation's bye-laws, as it is not possible to be the “judge and the judged”, i.e. it impinges on defending grassroots needs and on the exercise of social control (see Section 8.1.2). Social control is also weak, as people lack the capacity and knowledge to obtain adequate information and to exert effective control over the execution of public works (Antezana and De la Fuente 2009: 146).

Complicated out-of-context procedures

Other reasons for the poor municipal performance are related to the difficult and complicated “*trámites*” – the administrative rules and procedures that have to be followed – and to complying with established “*plazos*” (dates, periods) for implementing projects and accessing funds. The long processes of public advertising and company contracting leads to a very low spend of available funds. In our case study municipality, actual spending is reported to be under 50% of the projected funds.

Links to the prevention of corruption

One aspect that is repeatedly mentioned is the tightened regulation in the new “‘Marcelo Quiroga’ Law No. 004 for the Fight against Corruption, Illegal Enrichment and the Investigation of Fortunes”, which was enacted on March 2010. Arguing that “wanting to do things right, the government did them wrong”⁷⁵, interviewees state that even though this law helps to “cut off the hands” of the “thieves”, in reality the result has been that the municipal authorities do not carry out projects, as they are afraid of committing an error and ending up in court for even minor shortcomings in administrative procedures. At present, there are many mayors and councillors in this type of situation, some because they were corrupt and others because they lacked knowledge. Often it is the political opposition that brings legal proceedings against them. A councillor representing the union organisation was referring to that situation when he said, “If you execute, they will execute you, and if you do not execute, they will execute you as well.”

Leaders of the organisations and the municipal authorities, and the literature on the subject (Rist et al. 2005: 126) refer to the relevant public officials’ lack of capacity and competence. Indeed, the complicated procedures often require knowledge and experience that are beyond public officials:

[I am] working for the first time. We enter without any experience. We get to know by doing. I have just started to get the hang of things. We are delayed; I wanted to buy seed. In the highlands there is frost, in the valleys there is hail. But the procedures are very bureaucratic, so they take time, much time. I am worried about this. We have no seed and the sowing season has already started (Municipal employee and board member of the sectional central of San Pedro de Buena Vista. October 2012).

For grassroots representatives, whether communal leaders or district subalcaldes, these complex administrative practices complicate “*hacer gestión*” (advancing with the procedures required for the execution of the requested projects). After a long walk to get to the municipal’s centre village and push for the execution of a project, they often run into the barriers of institutional bureaucracy. They need to bring copies of

⁷⁵ MOP councillor representing the union. Llallagua, February 2013.

documents they did not bring with them, they have to get along in Spanish (which is the official language at the municipality) although they would be more accustomed to speak in Quechua, or have to come back again (requiring another long walk) for some small additional details. Furthermore, the public governance model does not match the rhythm of communal and rural life. Peasants usually sell their products in the municipal centre at the village fairs, which take place at weekends. However, the municipality does not work on these days, although this would make it possible to combine this activity with the attending to administrative procedures. An NGO director explained that municipal governments could not even properly attend to his NGO:

We have to do development as institutions. As well as the ayllus, the syndicates and the leaders, they go to the municipalities. But there is no support. We are like pilgrims of the 'Señor de Bombori' [sanctuary]. If you want to sign an agreement, you have to insist 10 or 20 times, have meetings, make phone calls, use up fuel and time. Naturally, we have a salary, but still, it's tiring sometimes. And if this is what happens to us, I do not even want to imagine what happens with the farmers from the ayllus and syndicates, it's exactly the same: they will be ignored. So sooner or later, we too decided not to work with the municipalities (NGO Director. Llallagua, September 2012).

Shortcomings in planning and allocating funds

As districts are composed of many different *comunidades*, their small budget generally gets spread thinly to cover many small projects. According to a municipal authority, this also impedes the districts in their planning to achieve food sovereignty, as this would require a longer-term integrated strategy, for example by complementing (in a specific locality) micro-irrigation systems with roads for market access. Often, the municipal technical staff in charge of providing advice and guiding district planning and implementation lack the technical expertise and experience for the task. In our case study locality Eskencachi, the technical staff member is seen as “simply another *dirigente*”, which suggests that he lacks professional experience. Municipal authorities relate this to the fact that the municipality generally wants to support and hire local professionals, with the drawback that these people often have less experience than professionals from other regions.

Municipal authorities have identified the staggered transfer of financial resources from the national government to the municipalities as a challenge to participatory and good planning. During the planning stage, municipalities often still do not know the exact amount they will have available. Consequently, the municipalities have to take decisions in the short term, often leading to investments that are not a priority for the grassroots. Besides this, they criticise that the national government imposes certain instructions when they are preparing the PDMs, which forces them to postpone local needs.

“We got into a taxi, but we don’t know how to drive”

Our observations show that there is indeed a disconnect between municipality’s development mandate and grassroots material expectations, and that the causes are multiple, interwoven and difficult to disentangle. Leaders and municipal authorities of the organisations sum these up as a series of complex regulations and bureaucratic procedures that they need to follow, which are perceived to be disconnected from “our reality”, whether these be the realities of communitarian and agro-based ways of life, or their own practices of organisation and decision-making. Leaders describe this as

getting into the same “taxi” (referring to the structure of municipalities) with complicated and bureaucratic procedures that are not suited to local circumstances and which they “do not know how to drive”. In this sense, they feel that they have become the administrators of the same capitalist and colonial system.

However, the two organisations draw different conclusions from this situation according to their different political visions. With the metaphor of the “taxi”, the *ayllu* organisation fundamentally challenges the very institution of the municipality, which it considers as having been imposed by the Spanish invaders and neoliberal decentralisation. The reconstitution of the ancestral territories as spaces of self-government is therefore the only mechanism that will solve the governance problems. The union organisation, on the other hand, does not question the division into municipalities *per se*. For this organisation, the “taxi” only refers to complicated and out-of-place laws and regulations that need improving.

9 Conclusions

The alliance between various peasant and indigenous movements from the Bolivian highlands and lowlands in the Pact of Unity led to the electoral victory of the MAS in 2005 and generated great hopes and expectations in “Evo” and his so-called “process of change”. This historical occasion drastically changed the indigenous peasant movements’ attitude of struggle with the state — which had been in the hands of the “neoliberals” and the “*k’aras*” — and has blurred the boundaries between the movement and the state.

Seven years after the “process of change” began, this research project sought to study the role of indigenous peasant organisations in local development and in the struggle against poverty. It focused on the two organisations that coexist in northern Potosí, i.e. the NCQQ and the FSUTOA-NP with its women’s organisation FSMTO-NP “BS”. We collected the opinions of leaders and people at the grassroots about “development” and “*vivir bien*”, and their experiences of the process of change. This study specifically looked at the role played by the two organisations by analysing their strategies in search of a “true” process of change. This also led us to understand their stances towards the MAS government and their influence on municipal governance.

The study findings suggest that the organisations’ conceptions of “development” and “*vivir bien*” are embedded in different political visions of how to integrate indigenous political practices and identities into the new “plurinational” state. The NCQQ understands “development” as possible only by reclaiming ancestral territories and nations as spaces of self-government. Within this perspective, the prevailing idea is that “*vivir bien*” is “to live as we do”, though with the complementary incorporation of new agricultural production technologies. For this organisation, development has to respect Mother Earth, natural resources and prevailing ways of life. From the perspective of the FSUTOA-NP/FSMTO-NP “BS”, development is related to the indigenous peasant population’s struggle against inequality and exploitation since colonial times. Their proposal of “integral development” reveals a more leftist idea of a state providing “public policies” that improve the standard of living by satisfying basic needs and creating productive development. At the same time, however, it emphasises the protection of natural resources, Mother Earth and prevailing ways of life.

These different visions of how to integrate their indigenous identities and practices into the state are crucial for understanding the organisations’ different positions towards the MAS. Although both organisations were once united in the fight against neoliberalism and the marginalisation of the indigenous peasant population, their different conceptions of “true change” have now accentuated the tensions between them. The NCQQ (as part of the nationwide CONAMAQ), has adopted a critical attitude towards the MAS. Its vision of consolidating a Charkas-Qhara Qhara Nation in northern Potosí has given rise to disagreements, specifically in relation to the government’s legislation on indigenous autonomy. A key moment in its marking its distance from the government were the protests against the government’s having granted mining concessions in Mallku Khota to the transnational mining company SASC. The fact that they needed to protect indigenous rights and Mother Earth from “our” president has generated resent-

ment, distrust and disappointment among leaders who were previously committed to the MAS's process of change.

On the other hand, according to their vision of "liberating the oppressed" by conquering local, departmental and national power, the union organisation decided to actively support the MAS government and to defend the political achievements of the "process of change". This alignment caused "confusion" regarding the role of the organisation vis-à-vis the state and party politics. Its traditional role of defending grassroots needs vis-à-vis the state has been weakened due to a lack of independence from the government and the MAS. The conflict over the mining concessions in Mallku Khota was another example of this. Despite its sensitivity to the exploitation of natural resources by transnational companies, the union organisation did not oppose the government's intention to back the transnational company at the beginning of the conflict. This position not only generated tensions with the NCQQ, it also deepened internal divisions. Some leaders have the impression that the organisation was "captured" by the MAS and they are now lobbying for a stronger independent union position. These observations have been taken up by the MOP, the political party of the union federation, which articulates this criticism as a political discourse in order to position itself as an alternative to the MAS. Hence, the MOP and the NCQQ coincide in their attitude towards the MAS though they do this for different reasons and with different political visions.

Besides such discord in the sphere of (national) party politics, the findings of our study underscore the crucial role these organisations play in local development. Both depict northern Potosí as an "extremely poor" region and see their main challenge as overcoming this poverty. At communal level, people use both organisations in their search for improved livelihood possibilities, particularly in their demand for support for agricultural production and for viable off-farm employment opportunities. Whichever organisation they belong to, people have the same material expectations on development, as they face the same socio-economic realities of living in agricultural *comunidades* while being dependent on migration. Thus, while the ideological differences between the two organisations cause conflicts at regional level, people are unaware of this organisational antagonism locally. There are even localities where both organisations are present and where they are in fact a complementary part of communal self-government, each with its respective roles and functions. The organisational parallelism is used strategically to appeal jointly to higher political authorities in order to promote progress in the particular *comunidad* or *ayllu*.

Both organisations support the demands of the *comunidades* not only at communal but also at sub-regional and regional level and try to get them met. Regarding potential forms of off-farm employment that meet local requirements, both are putting forward ideas of how to benefit from the nationalisation of mining in Mallku Khota. While they have successfully mobilised for nationalisation, we cannot yet assess the outcome – and thus the influence of the two organisations – as operations have not yet started and relevant discussions are still ongoing.

However, such insights are possible in the case of expectations of improved agricultural production. Here, the municipalities play a crucial role. Both organisations have

adopted strategies to influence the municipal administration. One is to act as brokers representing farmers' needs to the municipality. The other is to join the municipality, either as councillors or mayors (through election), its administrative bodies (as public officials), or as instances of social control. Indeed, our findings in the municipality of San Pedro de Buena Vista show that the indigenous peasant organisations have considerable political influence at this important level.

However, notwithstanding their ample influence on municipal governance, the political achievements of the process of change have yet to result in improved living conditions in the *comunidades*, and therefore the hopes and expectations invested in the *proceso de cambio* have been only partially met. It is observed across organisational and party lines that the situation in the *comunidades* has yet to change, particularly because of a lack of public investment and productive projects. The indigenous peasant organisations self-critically reflect on the question of why they have not been able to influence the municipal administration to the *comunidades*' benefit. One point of self-criticism admits that being indigenous in itself does not guarantee principles of good leadership and that, as *k'aras*, indigenous people can end up becoming corrupt as well. Besides this, indigenous peasant leaders criticise the bureaucratic and inappropriate administrative procedures that are perceived as foreign to "our reality", to their own political practices and to communitarian life. In this sense, they assert that they have got in a "taxi" that they do not know how to drive. Thus, despite the change of actors, in their view the municipal administration is still following the same logic, which they describe as capitalist, colonial and, above all, bureaucratic.

In line with their different visions of the articulation of the indigenous political practices within the state, the organisations draw different conclusions from this situation. The *ayllu* organisation fundamentally calls into question the very institution of the municipality, which it considers a colonial and neoliberal imposition by the state on ancestral territories and political forms of organisation. Therefore, the reconstitution of the ancestral territories as spaces of self-government is the only mechanism that can solve the problems in local governance. The union organisation, on the other hand, does not question the structuring in municipalities *per se*, but rather the existence of complicated and inappropriate laws and regulations.

Regarding the analysis of contemporary rural change, Borras and Saturno (2009: 19ff.) argued for the "importance of (re)engaging the real world politics of rural development" and "to confront, not evade, the messy complex reality of the agrarian world." The messy, complex reality of the struggle for poverty alleviation in northern Potosi highlights above all the challenges – and the consequent need to respect – leaders of indigenous peasant organisations at different levels have to face. This is especially the case when the "oppressors" are not only the "neoliberals, the *patrones*, the large entrepreneurs" but also *trámites* and *plazos*; where there is a need to translate nationalisation into labour opportunities that are acceptable to local *comunidades*, and where their political base is becoming impatient with the state – a state with which the indigenous peasant movements are deeply interwoven.

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Zurich / Mumbai, June 2014, Urs Geiser and R. Ramakumar, Project Coordinators

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Seven years after the coming to power of the first indigenous president in Bolivia, Evo Morales, this study looks at indigenous peasant organisations' strategies, expectations and visions based on their aspiration to pursue local-level development for the grassroots. We explore how indigenous peasant organisations' influence on the state at the national, departmental and municipal level has increased the leverage of the marginalized rural population's concerns. In our case study region, the North of Potosí, we listened to what organisation leaders and grassroots people had to say about their expectations of "development" and "*vivir bien*" and their experience of the process of change, with a specific focus on the interplay between the grassroots, indigenous peasant organisations and the state. Insights indicate that among the indigenous peasant population, the coming to power of "their" president has spread a new sense of being recognized by the state. However, there is disappointment and growing disillusionment with the limitations of the processes in addressing material needs in the *comunidades*. While there have been some improvements in housing, education, health, or water supply, people affirm that life in the *comunidades* has not improved, basically because of lack of support for production. This lack, in turn, emerges less from peasant movements' political visions than from multiple and interwoven problems such as competition between the movements, challenges faced by representatives who are now part of a local administration, and the persistence of complex bureaucratic regulations and procedures.

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